

THE QURAN AND YOU

BY

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Translated into English by

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Maulana Mohammad Manzoor Nomani's present contribution, along with two of his earlier books—*Islam Kiya Hai?* and *Deen-o-Shariat*—, provides a complete introduction to the study of the fundamental teachings of Islam. In these books the Maulana has undertaken to present the basic message of Islam in a form and language that was appealing to the minds of the modern-educated classes and could, also be, helpful in removing the doubts and suspicions which are raised in the sphere of religious belief and practice, in general, and against Islam in particular, in the current materialistic context of things. Two of these have already appeared in English under the titles of *What Islam Is?* and *Islamic Faith And Practice* respectively, and the translation of the present one will, it is hoped, mark the fulfilment of a great need. It will make it possible to suggest confidently a set of studies on Islam to anyone who may be wanting to read about it in English for, as far as I am aware, no better and more precise and straightforward exposition of what Islam stands for and demands from its followers is to be found in that language. I, honestly, consider it a matter of pride and deep gratitude to the Almighty that the choice of Maulana Nomani for translating the whole series into English fell upon me.

Maulana Mohommad Manzoor Nomani is too well-known as a writer on Islamic subjects to need an introduction from me. All of his works have been eminently successful and seen a number of reprints. In fact, not a year passes without fresh editions of his books being brought out. In this respect, his record is definitely unique.

Besides Maulana Nomanis's great sincerity of purpose, what distinguishes him from his contemporaries and holds the secret of the outstanding popularity of his works is the simplicity and directness of his style and the universality of his approach. Since the Maulana's literary endeavour is a part of his larger missionary activity, his effort always is to reach as many people

as possible through his pen and to convince them, at once, of his earnestness so that they can be brought into a receptive frame of mind. Pragmatism is the keynote of his writings and the chief merit of this volume, also, lies in the fact that the author has kept his mind fixed, from the beginning to the end, on the factor of utility.

The Maulana has attempted to cover the entire range of Quranic teachings, from the conceptual to the practical, in these few hundred pages, and, in this, he has succeeded admirably. Proceeding from the fundamental articles of faith and subjects like Divine Attributes, Apostleship and the Hereafter, the narrative goes on to include what the Quran has to teach about social and moral behaviour, monetary dealings and the importance of earning a clean livelihood. All these things have been discussed with utmost clarity and conciseness. But the most valuable part of the book, in my opinion, is the one which deals with the Quranic concept of Monotheism. In it, the Maulana has explained the various aspects of the doctrine of Divine Unity—Unity of Being, Unity of Attributes and Unity of Functions—in such a convincing style that it can not fail to bring satisfaction to anyone whose heart is not totally dead to spiritual feeling.

The Quran being a guidance for mankind, and not exclusively for Muslims, Maulana Nomani has paid due attention to the needs of non-Muslim readers while expounding the basic tenets of the Quran. This has not only enhanced the value of the book, but, also, made its rendering into other languages particularly worthwhile. It is in this spirit that I have undertaken its translation into English in which language the demand for a reliable literature on Islam is happily growing day by day, not only in the Indo-Pak sub-continent, but all over the world.

I hope the readers will kindly overlook my shortcomings and treat them with indulgence.

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FOREWORD

At the very outset, I wish to make it clear to my readers that I am not a scholar of the Quran by any means, and, also, to assure them that it is not out of modesty that I say this, but a fact. Like those educated in the traditional Arabic Madrassas, I can understand only the bare meaning of the holy Book, and my endeavour, by the Grace of God, always is to read it with an intelligent appreciation of its import. This, of course, is a great favour of the Lord, but a greater favour on my humble self is that, sometimes, during the recitation of the holy Quran, my heart is endued with a depth of feeling and an awareness which has left me in no doubt about its being the Word of God. The Divine origin of the Quran has become a living reality with me. Or, as one would say, just as while eating a sweet or saltish thing a person becomes aware of its sweetness or saltiness simply by the sensation it produces on his tongue and he has to make no particular effort for discerning its taste, the feeling which is produced in my heart at the time of the recitation of the glorious Quran lends me an instinctive assurance of its Divine origin and I do not stand in need of an argument to support it.

Though there is no particular time or season for the holy Quran to evoke such a response within me, I experience it more frequently in the month of Ramzan, and then, the realisation of the grandeur and importance of its message and guidance, naturally, becomes much stronger.

It was in this month, a few years ago (I do not remember the exact date), that while I was reading the Quran my heart was deeply moved by it, and I was seized with the desire to do whatever I could to carry its teachings, in its own preaching and instructive style, to those that were not acquainted with

them. I decided to write a book of an average length in which the precepts of the Quran were presented, under separate headings, in such a way that both Muslims and non-Muslims could understand them easily, and no argument or discussion was introduced from my side, but only what the Quran said was set forth, in my own words, and in its singularly simple and straightforward manner. Where an elucidation or explanation was needed, it was, of course, to be supplied by me.

I, thereupon, quickly prepared an outline of the book and the task of collection of the relevant verses of the Quran was completed before the month was out. Now, only the arrangement and compilation of the material was left, and I thought that the book would be ready in a few months. But, it so happened that I could not devote even three or four days, at a stretch, to it, and, once, not a single line was written for full two years. However, by the mercy of Allah, the book, after passing through all these stages, is now in your hands. The responsibility for its faults and shortcomings is wholly mine while if there is any merit or virtue in it, it is solely from God.

Before bringing these lines to close, I would like to add a few things more about the present volume.

Firstly, since the way the holy Quran shows is not intended only for the Muslims, but for the whole of mankind, I have also kept before me the general reading public and not merely its followers while writing these pages. It is, therefore, my natural wish that this book should reach not only the Muslims but, also, as many of my non-Muslim brethren as possible. God-willing, I will do all that lies in my power towards it, but others, too, can cooperate by thinking out ways and means of making the book available to educated non-Muslims and carrying them out into practice if they found it worthy of their patronage.

Secondly, in the translation of the Quranic texts I have not followed the literal method but paid greater attention to the convenience and understanding of my readers. For those

who may require a literal translation of the Quran, Maulana Rafiuddins's rendering of it in Urdu is, in my opinion, the best.

And, thirdly, the special purpose for which this book has been written demanded that it should not become too voluminous. Hence, it was not possible to include all the different aspects of the Quranic teachings in our discussion. Yet, I believe that all the important features have been covered, and hope that it would be found quite sufficient for the object in view.

In the end, my earnest request to the readers is to remember me in their prayers of Mercy and Forgiveness to the Lord for next to Divine Benevolence, my greatest provision for the Hereafter are the sympathetic prayers of His devout servants.

MOHAMMAD MANZOOR NOMANI

LUCKNOW

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A WORD ABOUT THE REVEALER OF THE QURAN¹

It is, generally, agreed that in the sixth century of the Christian era, the whole world was immersed in moral gloom and spiritual torpor. The torch of heavenly guidance had been extinguished. Europe was steeped in the darkness of the Middle Ages. Iran and its dependencies were caught in the tempest of the Mazdakite Movement which had played havoc with the nobler values of life and reduced man to a beast. In India, the Puranic Age was in its prime. By all accounts, it marked the most woeful phase in the long and chequered history of the land. The condition of the other parts of the known world was no less deplorable.

Situated, so to speak, in the heart of the world was the Peninsula of Arabia. Owing to the centrality of its geographical position it was known, in the olden days as the "navel of the world". The whole country was devoid of the light of spiritual guidance, learning and civilization. The sixth century A. D., found the Arabs plunged in depravity, perversion and idolatry. Instead of one God, innumerable deities and images of stone were worshipped and human sacrifice was prevalent. The House of Ka'aba, built by the Prophets Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) with their own hands for the worship of the Almighty, had been turned into a huge idol temple. The law of the jungle prevailed everywhere. There was not even the semblance of a Government. Murder, infanticide and robbery were the pride of the Arabs. Daughters were buried alive at birth. Social debasement and lewdness had become the rule so that people performed naked the ritual of circumambulation around

1. These lines were written specially for the English edition.

the Ka'aba. In many tribes the eldest son took the widows of his father as his wives. There was no material well-being either. Many people were driven by poverty to live on carrion and insects.

It was in these circumstances, and in the midst of these people, that a child was born, exactly fourteen hundred years ago¹, at Mecca, in the respectable Banu Hashim family of the Quraish tribe. The child was born an orphan, as his father had died while he was still in the mother's womb. The widowed mother brought him up. When he was six years old, the mother, too, died, and, thereafter, his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, took care of him. But Abdul Muttalib's guardianship was to last only for two years. When the child was in the eighth year of his life his grandfather, also, passed away, and his uncle, Abu Talib, took him under his affectionate protection. The child was named Mohammad which means 'The praised one', i. e., one who is worthy of praise due to his natural disposition, character and attainments.

Education in those days was not common among the Arabs. Very few people knew the art of reading and writing. So Mohammad (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) also remained unlettered. But he had other special virtues which distinguished him from the young men of his time. He did not have any of the vices that were prevalent in his city. God had saved him from all bad practices.

As the Prophet grew up, he thought of earning his own livelihood so that the burden of his maintenance might not fall on his uncle who already had a large family to support and was not rich. He chose trade, which was the family profession, but

1. According to the well-known biographer of the holy Prophet, Qazi Sulaiman Mansurpuri, he was born on April 22, 571 A. D. Incidentally, today, when these lines are being written the date is 22nd April, 1971. Thus, on this day exactly fourteen hundred years have elapsed since the birth of the sacred Prophet.

due to the paucity of funds he could not set up his own business. He began to work in partnership with others. He provided the labour while they provided the money. Soon his reputation for honesty, sincerity and trustworthiness spread and the people of Mecca gave him the title of *Al-Amin*, meaning 'The trusted one'. Whoever came into contact with him was impressed by his good manners and perfect moral attributes.

In Mecca, and belonging to the tribe of the Quraish, there lived a lady, a rich widow, called Khudaija. She had her own business, and, also, did trade in partnership with other people by advancing them money. She was very intelligent and possessed a noble character. The Prophet, also, had done some business for her and she was well pleased with his honesty, justice and high morals. Though the lady was about forty years old and the Prophet was only twenty-five, and she, also, had children from her earlier marriages, she wanted to marry him. The marriage between the Prophet and Hazrat Khudaija, thus, took place.

After the marriage, the Prophet was released of the need to make a living. He began to devote more and more time to the service of the people, specially of the weak and the down-trodden, and to the establishment of peace and order in the land. Life went on like that and people had, generally, come to love and admire him for his impeccable morals, righteousness and solicitude for the poor till in the fortieth year of his life an extra-ordinary change came over the Prophet. He was seized with an over-powering desire to spend his time in prayer and meditation at some secluded place far away from everyone.

Very often the Prophet would walk to a mountain, on the outskirts of Mecca, and go to a cave called Hira. He would take his food with him and stay there for a week. At the end of the week he would come home and return to the cave after replenishing his meagre provisions.

Till then the Prophet had not attained the knowledge of God, of His Being and Attributes, which was later vouchsafed to

him through Divine inspiration, and no particular mode of worship, also, had been taught to him. But he possessed that undefinable awareness of God and eagerness to earn His nearness and good favour which was expected of an earnest seeker of truth, blessed with a noble character, a refined soul and an illumined heart. He contemplated and prayed to God in accordance with his inner inclination and aptitude.

The Prophet was now in his fortieth year. One day, in the month of Ramzan, while he was in the Hira Cave, a strange thing happened and he returned home, pale and trembling, as if he was stricken with fear or high fever. On arriving, he said to his wife, Hazrat Khudaija, "Cover me with a thick cloth. Cover me with a thick cloth."

When the Prophet recovered from the shock he told his wife everything that had happened to him, the visit by the heavenly angel in the Cave, the way he had conveyed to him the Divine Word and made him repeat it and the tremendous strain the whole experience had put on his heart and soul.

Being the mature and very wise lady that she was, Hazrat Khudaija encouraged the Prophet and assured him that God would not fail an honest and just man like him who helped the poor, and the orphaned and did nothing to hurt his fellow-men. She, then, took him to her uncle, named Waraka bin Nofel, who had forsaken the Paganish beliefs much earlier and embrace Christianity. Waraka was a blind old man. He had studied the holy scriptures of the Torah and the Bible, and, also, translated them into Arabic.

When Hazrat Khudaija told his uncle what had happened to the Prophet in the Cave, his face shone with joy and he exclaimed, "By the Divine Power that holds my life, to Mohammad has come the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit which brings the Divine message and commands to the Prophets. It appears that God has chosen you, O Mohammad, for the lofty mission of Apostleship, Listen carefully: your community will

turn against you. It will persecute you and drive you away" In the end, Waraka said sorrowfully, "I wish I was alive and strong at that time and could help you with all my power"

This was the beginning of the ministry of the sacred Prophet.

Upto that time the Prophet had been leading a clean and spotless life of moral rectitude and social service. But, by nature, he was a man of few words and loved solitude. During those days the Arabs had a passion for poetry, but the Prophet did not take an interest in it also. He never appeared before the public as a poet or an orator. As a reformer, too, he did not start any movement or launch a struggle for the moral upliftment of his people. He had never said a word, during all those forty years, on Revelation and Apostleship, Resurrection and After-life, and Faith and Divine Law. He did not give any guidance to his community on political, economic or sociological problems. In sum, till the age of forty, he had not given the faintest indication of being interested in such matters or possessing even a rudimentary knowledge of them.

But in the forty-first year of his life, after the event of Cave Hira, he was suddenly transformed. It appeared that a new spirit had come to dwell in him. He was a changed man now. He said to his people, "Inspiration has come to me from God, and He has entrusted me with the mission of His Apostleship as He once had Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaq (Issac), Yaqoob (Jacob) and Yusuf (Joseph), and, then, Moosa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus)".

He told them that the One God, and no one aside of Him, was the Creator and Sustainer of the whole universe. He was free from every kind of blemish. All the attributes of Greatness and Perfection were assembled in Him. He, alone, was worthy of worship and obedience. Life and death, health and sickness, and riches and poverty, in short, all kinds of good and evil, and gain and loss, lay solely in His hands. No one was like Him, His

coequal or partner. He was without a similitude. The gods and goddesses that were worshipped besides Him and regarded as dispensers of needs had nothing in their power. To worship them, or anyone apart from Him, was a fatal sin and an unpardonable crime. Hence, they should worship the One God and associate no one with Him. He, alone, was the Worshipped One, the Supreme Being, the Almighty to whom all their prayers and supplications were to be addressed. They should love Him wholly and in all conscience. This command was for him, for them, and for everyone.

He, also, told his people, and tried to the utmost to convince them that the world in which they lived was not a permanent one. It was not to endure forever. Just as everyone who was born was destined to die, after completing the allotted span of life, the entire world, too, would be destroyed one day at the command of God. That will be the Last Day. Then God, by His power, will raise up the dead again and bring another world, the world of the Hereafter, into existence in which men will be requited for the good or evil they might have done during their earthly sojourn. Those who will have led a life of piety and believed in God and obeyed His commands will be rewarded in the world to come with His choicest favours and blessings while those who will have denied their Lord and transgressed against His laws and spent their days in folly and neglect will be caught in a dreadful chastisement.

After it, the Prophet informed them in detail about the rights of God on His servants and the rights of His servants on each other. He exhorted them to cultivate piety and a good moral disposition and to avoid wicked and shameful things and warned them against the evil sequel of perversion and immorality.

In the same way, he conveyed to them the guidance of God with regard to trade and commerce, occupation and employment, and all other monetary dealings and transactions and explained to them what was fair and legitimate, and what was otherwise in those spheres.

The Prophet, also, told his people about the allowed and the forbidden articles of food and drink. He did not stop merely at exhortation and elucidation but these things became the sole mission and purpose of his life. The anxiety for the propagation of those truths and the moral and spiritual upliftment of the Arabs and the whole of mankind became so great with him that nothing else could hold his interest. He kept himself occupied with his work day and night and, also, prayed to God from the depth of his heart that his people would wake up and realise the truth.

As a consequence of preaching his mission, the Prophet had to bear tremendous hardships. He was tortured and persecuted. The Prophet and his family were boycotted, socially and economically, for three long years. Guards were posted on all sides so that the supplies of food and clothing could not reach them. But the Prophet bore it all with patience and an iron will and did not slacken his efforts. He did not make a compromise with his enemies and prayed to God even more fervently for his people.

Those among the Arabs in whose souls an element of virtue was present and who possessed, in some degree, the capacity to respond to the call of faith accepted his mission, in ones and twos, and they, too, became the targets of persecution. It continued in that way for about twelve years till the Prophet was forced by Pagans to leave Mecca. It had become impossible for him to carry out the duty of preaching the Divine faith in his own city.

The Prophet, thereupon, migrated to Medina, at the command of God, which now became the capital of Islam. On reaching there, the mission of Apostleship began to be fulfilled with greater enthusiasm, and, by the grace of the Lord, the pace of the acceptance of the Divine Call was also very much accelerated.

Within a short time a wonderful system of Government was established in Medina. It was a unique arrangement in which

there was no regular army or police force. No one was an authorised functionary of the State and yet everyone was its functionary. All the functions of the Government were discharged by the Muslims who performed their duties without remuneration or an official designation. They did it solely for the sake of God and in the hope of earning His reward and good pleasure.

The new type of Government, founded by the Prophet Mohammad, showed to the world how the work of the State could be carried out and administrative functions performed in an ideal manner, without an army or an exchequer. It had to go to war against the enemies, and these wars can still serve, in many ways, as perfect models of warfare for mankind. It also, entered into treaties, made covenants and levied taxes from which much can be learnt even today.

After the Migration, the Prophet lived in this world only for ten years. In this short period almost the whole of Arabia had come under the sway of Islam and a large part of its population had embraced the Divine faith. Tens of thousands of persons who were sunk in idolatry, devil-worship and fetishness and to whom the life to come and retribution for good and evil as motives of action were practically unknown became, in the Prophet's company and through his guidance, such immaculate specimens of humanity that the like of them cannot be found in the annals of our race. Not individuals but the whole nation was awakened from slumber and it sprang into a new and earnest life of faith and uprightness.

All this was accomplished within the short space of ten—or, if the earlier phase of the Prophet's Ministry in Mecca is also included, twenty-two years by a man about whom it is known that he was illiterate and never had the benefit of the society of wise and godly men, and who was neither a poet nor an orator nor had he, upto the age of forty, given an indication of the ability for leadership and organisation. Those, again, were the days when the press, the radio and other modern media of

mass communication did not exist. The question, now, is how was this miracle, this most stupendous revolution in history was brought about through the agency of this individual?

This venerated servant of the Lord used to declare in a frank and straightforward manner that there really was nothing in him. He would say, "I am the son of a poor Quraish woman and I am also illiterate. I can neither read nor write. Whatever I tell about God, His Being, Nature, Attributes and Oneness, and about the Last Day, the After-life and Heaven and Hell, and the laws I formulate regarding the various branches of life; in fact, whatever I preach, instruct or enjoin is not of my own volition or understanding but from the Lord who is the Creator and Cherisher of the worlds. He has raised me up as His Messenger so that I may convey His guidance to you and serve among you as His Apostle". He recited a message, a communication which was the source and springhead of the guidance. There was a marvellous charm and appeal in it. Though it was in Arabic, which was the language of the land, it was supremely original and unique. Even the critics and opponents were impressed by it and called it magic. But its revealer insisted that it was not of his composition or authorship but the Word of God which had been inspired to him. It was the command and guidance for him in the same way as it was for others and the whole of humanity. This was the Quran, the Last of the Divine Scriptures.

The Quran is still present among us in its original form, intact and unsullied. A seeker of Truth can even today conclude for himself, by bestowing a little thought on it, that it could definitely not be the work of a human mortal.

What has been said in the Quran on subjects like the Nature and Attributes of God constitutes the highest degree of awareness which no man, of whatever merit or ability, can attain without Divine inspiration. Similarly, the way transcendental truths, such as, Resurrection and Futurity are expounded in it is positively beyond the reach of human intellect

and reasoning. The teachings of the Quran concerning the other spheres of life, also, are a class by themselves. These precepts are wholly sufficient for the guidance of mankind, in spite of all the changes that have taken place, or may take place, in the world we live in. About them it is, indeed, impossible to imagine that they are the product of a human mind, much less of the mind of a person like Mohammad bin Abdullah (Peace and Blessings of the Lord be upon whom).

In fine, the Quran itself is the proof of its Divine Origin, of its being the Word of God, and Guidance for mankind from Him, and of the fact that its revealer and interpreter, Prophet Mohammad, is among His true Apostles.

May Allah guide our steps and show us the Straight Path, the path of those upon whom is His favour.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

CHAPTER I

EXISTENCE OF GOD

The entire structure of religious belief and practice is based upon the affirmation of the truth that there is someone who is the Creator of us all and of the whole universe, and it is He who is controlling and dispensing the world according to His Authority and Will. Should this starting point of the World of Faith be itself rejected by anyone all the things appertaining to religion must appear to him to be nothing but irrationality and superstition.

The question of God's existence is, thus, the fundamental question of religion and any religious appeal or preaching can be addressed only to those who have first accepted this basic reality. But, since it is a fact that the awareness of God is as natural and instinctive to man as the awareness of his own existence, and no special effort or argument is needed to persuade him to believe that there is a God—and it is exactly for this reason that the bulk of the human population has always believed in Him, so much so that even during the present phase of our history, which is known as the phase of materialism and irreligiousness, an overwhelming majority of men take for granted the existence of God, the Quran does not pay much attention to this issue, nor enter into a detailed discussion over it. Nevertheless, by means of an occasional hint or suggestion it has built up a line of reasoning which is quite sufficient to convince anyone and produce in his heart faith in the existence of God provided, of course, that he has not taken leave of his senses or shut his mind to everything that may not conform to a fixed idea or a pre-conceived notion.

It should, further, be remembered that the Quran does not enter into polemical disputations in the manner of a logician to bring home the fundamental realities of faith, like the existence of God, which may silence the critic but do not bring satisfaction to his heart. On the other hand, it appeals to the good sense of man, to the basic soundness of his understanding and invites him to ponder over the whole scheme of creation. It tells him to look around, to see the world that is spread on all sides of him, and of which he, too, is a part, and the reality will dawn upon him automatically and he will himself discover the truth that is sought to be conveyed to him. This simple exercise in reflection and study will bring the light of faith to his inner self. Against the background of this brief introduction, read the following verses of the Quran :

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاجْتِلاَفِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ
مِمَّا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَخْيَاهُ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَشَّرَ فِيهَا
مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

Lo! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of night and day, and the ships which run upon the sea with that which is of use to men, and the water which Allah sendeth down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and dispersing all kinds of living beings therein, and in the ordinance of the winds, and the clouds obedient between heaven and earth; (in all these things that are apparent to everyone) there are signs (of Allah's sovereignty) for people who have sense. (—II: 164)

After drawing attention to the grand design of the heavens and the earth, and the orderly rotation of day and night, and the sailing of the ships on the high seas, and the rain and its portents and effects, and the regulation of the winds, and the disciplined behaviour of the clouds between the earth and the sky, the Quran calls on men to reflect upon them and assures that if they exercised the normal understanding that had been granted to them, they would find all these things proclaiming, silently but distinctly, that whatever they were and in whichever state, they had not come into existence by them-

selves, but were the creation of an All-knowing and All-powerful Being. Again, in *Sura-i-Al-Anam*, it occurs :

إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوَى يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَغَيْرِ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ فَأَلَيْ تُؤْفِكُونَ

It is God who causeth the seed-grain and the date-stone to split and sprout. He causeth the living to issue from the dead, and He is the one to cause the dead to issue from the living: That is God, then how are ye deluded away from the truth. (—VI: 12)

The Quran says that people constantly see that the seed-grain or date-stone is first buried under the earth—neither the seed-grain and the date-stone are possessed of any will or intelligence, nor is the earth—all these things are absolutely dead and inert; yet, after a few days, the hidden hand of some Unseen Power splits the seeds in the bosom of the earth, and, then, an excessively soft and delicate shoot grows out of it, and piercing through the hard layers of the earth, comes out on the surface to develop into a full grown plant or tree, as the case may be. Now, let them ponder over it and ask themselves who makes the seed split and sprout under the earth, and by whose will does the tiny shoot, which is even more slender than a silken thread, force its way through it. Does it happen by itself? Does the seed-grain or the date-stone accomplish it all on its own? Can their commonsense accept it? The Quran says No! It all is the handiwork of an All-wise and Omnipotent Being, which is God. *It is God who causeth the seed-grain and the date-stone to split and sprout!* And His Power and Authority does not manifest itself in this manner only in respect of the seed-grain or the date-stone, but there are so many other living things which Allah causes, in the same way, to issue forth from dead things and dead things to issue forth from living things. People witness all this: they see, for instance, the living bird emerging from the lifeless egg and inanimate articles coming out of animate beings. With such clear signs of God scattered so abundantly around them, why do they go astray?

Or, take these verses from *Sura-i-R'ad*

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قَطْعٌ مُتَبَعٍ وَجُنُثٌ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَزُرُوعٌ وَخَيْلٌ صَوْنٌ وَغَيْرُ صَوْنٍ يُسْئَلُ
بِهِمْ أَكْثَرُ وَنَفْثٌ بَعْضُهَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الْأَكْلِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

And in the earth are neighbouring tracts, vineyards and ploughed lands, and date-palms, like and unlike (growing thickly or alone), which are watered with one water. And We have made some of them to excel others in fruit. Lo! herein, verily, are portents for people who have sense. (—XIII: 4)

The Quran invites men to bestow some thought over the state of the earth on which they walk and which gives them sustenance. In it there are tracts of land lying adjacent to one another, and yet what a great difference is often found in the nature of their soil and productivity. If one plot of land is suited for the cultivation of wheat, the other for the cultivation of sugarcane. Similarly, in one plot grapes are being grown while in its neighbouring plot a food-crop is thriving and in the third the date-palms are standing, both jointly and alone. These date-palms are watered with one water, they take in the same air and are touched by the same sunshine, yet the fruit they bear is different from plant to plant, not only in shape and size but also in taste. Is all this variation and disparity of kind and quality taking place at random and without any aim or principle? No, in this difference and variety there are portents for those who have sense and from them they can obtain a living awareness of the underlying Reality and a clear knowledge of the Divine Agency by whose power and command all this is taking place.

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ أَأَنْصَبْنَاهُ الْمَاءَ صَبًّا ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقًّا فَأَنْبَتْنَا
فِيهَا حَبًّا وَعِنَبًا وَقَضْبًا وَزَيْتُونًا وَنَخْلًا وَحَدَائِقَ غُلَبًا وَزَايَاً

Let man consider his food:

How We pour water in showers
Then split the earth in clefts
And cause the grain to grow therein
And grapes and green fodder
And olive trees and palm-trees
And garden-closes of thick foliage
And fruits and grasses:
Provision for you, and your cattle.

(—LXXX: 24-32)

In the above verses, man is persuaded to reflect upon the food he eats. He should ask himself from where does the corn come from which his bread is made? How do all the fruits and vegetables and the fodder for his cattle grow? Who sends down the rain? By whose command do the plants spring up from the seeds that are sown deep in the earth? And who makes the earth split and allow the slender sprouts of the plants to shoot up? Let man only ponder, as a seeker of truth, over what he eats and the knowledge of his real Sustainer and Nourisher and of His unbounded Power and Wisdom will dawn upon him and he will come to realise the Vital Truth clearly and without fail.

وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةٌ لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعْلَمٌ لَكُمْ بِظُنُونِهِمْ
مِنْ بَيْنِ قُرُونٍ وَدَرَكْنَاهَا غَلَصًا فَأَمَّا الشَّرِيبُ

And lo! in the cattle there is a lesson for you. We give you to drink of that is which in their bellies, from betwixt the refuse and the blood, pure milk palatable to the drinkers. (—XVI: 66)

Here, the Quran exhorts us to bestow a little thought on the cattle whose milk we drink. Inside their bellies there are canals of blood as well as faeces, and at no time are their bellies free from ample amount of impure blood and filthy waste. Yet, close to the parts that are always loaded with blood and faeces is the place from where milk is obtained and what an excellent drink it makes! There is neither a trace of blood in it nor the faintest stink of the faeces. Now, whose workmanship is it that makes such a wonderful thing possible? Is it the cow or the buffalo that does it? Or, has the ingenuity of man called this living factory of milk into being? The answer is: No; it is solely a manifestation of the matchless power of the same Supreme Being that has created us and the rest of the world.

At another place, the Quran advances a powerful and convincing argument in the form of a challenge. It asks:

أَلَمْ يَلَمْ أَتَى اللَّهُ شَأْنًا فَاطْرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

Can there be a doubt concerning Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth? (—XIV: 10)

The holy Quran has, through this one sentence, set up the entire vastness and immensity of creation for our consideration. The seeing man beholds the sky; he observes the sun, the moon and the stars and experiences their light, heat or coldness as the case may be; he finds the solid earth under his feet, perceives its sprawling fields and orchards and eats the corn and fruit that are grown in them; he admires the lovely flowers springing up from its bosom and enjoys their fragrance; he avails himself of the thousand things it throws up and profits by their amazing properties and utility. Can he, after seeing, enjoying and experiencing all these things really be in doubt about the existence of their Creator? Unless his mind has become thoroughly perverted, can he seriously imagine that these things have become what they are by their own choice and volition or that it is the logic of a philosopher or the skill of a craftsman that has done the trick?

Again, take these verses from *Sura-i-Zariyat* :

وَبِالْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ ۖ وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصَرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

On the earth are portents for those of assured faith, as also in your own selves. Will ye then not see? (—LI: 20-21)

Apart from the signs of God that are scattered all over the earth and the skies, man himself is a vast wonder-house of Divine workmanship. Let him look into himself with a clean heart and an understanding mind and all his skepticism will disappear.

Indeed, if man only reflected on his own existence, on his limbs and on the whole design of his life, there would be left no room for doubt or misgiving about the existence of God. Let him think who chiselled his features in the mother's womb? Where from did the soul come into his body? Who made all the provisions of life for him? Who gave vision to his eyes, hearing to his ears and the sense of smell to his nose? Who imparted to his tongue and palate the power to perceive the taste of the things he eats and drinks? Who blessed him with the faculty of speech? Were all these favours done to him by his father or mother? Or, were the services of a

physician acquired for furnishing him with his form and figure and powers and faculties? Or, again, did he function as his own creator? Evidently, none of these explanations is true. Still more absurd will it be for him to assume that he came into existence simply by fluke or as a matter of course. There must be someone who made him, and who can he be except the All-powerful God? All these favours have, surely, been bestowed upon man by no one save Allah.

CHAPTER II

DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

The knowledge of the existence of God, as we have seen in the preceding Chapter, is instinctive to man. It is ingrained in his nature. What we mean is that so far as the simple truth is concerned that there is a superhuman Power which has created the world and is controlling it according to its Will, the appreciation of it is as positive and natural to man as of his own existence. But with the nature and attributes of the Divine Being it is different. Although it is of supreme importance for us to know what it actually is and what are its matchless powers and superlative qualities—without it we can neither attain the goal of God-realisation nor obtain a true understanding of the inner reality and significance of our relationship with Him—we cannot do it on our own. In fine, the concept of Divine Attributes is among the things about which while it is highly necessary for us to be properly informed, we are dependent for our knowledge upon the guidance of the chosen Apostles of God and His sacred Scriptures.

At the time of the revelation of Quran, belief in the existence of God was present almost among all the religions and communities, but so far as His Attributes were concerned, no correct awareness and understanding of them was to be found anywhere in the world. People, universally, were caught in the worst of follies in this respect. All the major religions which flourished in those days, and their fundamental books, are still with us. Or, at least, a full historical record of them is available. A little scrutiny will show how faulty and degrading their concepts of Divinity were and under what grave mistakes their followers, who still survive, are labouring even today regarding the Divine Attributes. In any case, the question of the Attributes of God is included among the grievous misconceptions the holy Quran has sought to remove through its teachings.

For a proper appreciation of the value and importance of what the Quran has taught in this connection it would be advisable to enquire, at least in passing, how people felt about God and what erroneous concepts were prevalent in the world concerning His Attributes at the time of its revelation.

A number of religious communities, in spite of the fact that they took it for granted that all the existing things had been created by one God, were the victims of the deception that just as in the world there was a king or a monarch, but he did not look after the administration of his empire personally and left most of the work to his ministers and other officers who did what they liked, in the same way, God, also, did not concern Himself with the day to day management of the world and all that happened here was not done directly by Him. There were some holy beings (gods and goddesses) who were very close to Him and to whom He had delegated a large part of His authority, and in these matters it was their will that prevailed. These saints and deities could make or unmake whomsoever they pleased, they could confer anything upon anyone or take it away from him and the success and failure, and happiness and suffering of all mankind was dependent, practically, on their sweet will.

Another common fallacy was the belief that in the manner of the worldly rulers with whom the practice was that there were some persons who, by reason of kinship or affection, exercised a powerful influence over them so much so that they could not turn down their requests or reject their recommendations and always found themselves compelled to do what they wanted, God, too, was so closely attached to some spiritually elevated beings that, willingly or unwillingly, He had to yield to their requests and accept their intercessions.

Some people, again, drew the image of God after the experience they had of the living things around them. They supposed, for example, that He, too, like human beings underwent the various states of feeling, such as, joy and sorrow, and pain and pleasure, and was affected by them in the same manner. Others still likened Him to a despot who was full of ferocity and anger and knew no law, nor observed any principle. He was

the embodiment of tyranny and oppression, and, when aroused, inflicted the severest of punishment on men simply for the satisfaction of His anger.

At the root of all these and other misconceptions which were common to the world in the olden days—and are encountered even today—there, in the main, lay the fact that in popular estimation kingship was the most wonderful thing and those who sat on the regal thrones, the most marvellous beings on the earth. Thus, the habits and qualities which were, generally, believed to be the characteristics of kings and emperors were readily attributed, in a more magnified form, to God as well, and it was because of this confusion between the concepts of Divinity and royalty that Godhead was, for the most part, interpreted in terms of power and anger and the Almighty was looked upon as someone who was only to be feared and dreaded.

On the other side, a long time before the Quran was revealed, Jesus Christ had, with the object of removing the above misunderstanding, bestowed a special attention on the Compassionateness and Benevolence of God, and, as the Bible indicates, drew upon the analogy of paternal love to press home the point. But, thanks to the unscrupulousness of his followers, this simple analogy became perverted, and, in course of time, gave birth to the twin doctrines of God the Son and Atonement. The presence of these doctrines among the Christians, in any event, is due to an incorrect appreciation of the Attributes of Divinity.

Such, in a broad way, were the notions that were prevalent about God among the polytheistic and idolatrous peoples, and their polytheism was largely derived from them. We will, now, see what the Quran has to say on this subject. In *Sura-l-Fateha*, which forms the opening chapter of the holy Quran, the veil over the Attributes of Divinity is lifted in this glorious manner.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ الرَّحْمَنُ
الرَّحِيمُ مَلِكُ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds. Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Owner of the Day of Judgement. (—1: 1-3)

The first Attribute of God which is revealed here that He is the Cherisher and Sustainer of the World, signifies that the relation between God and the universe does not consist merely of this much that He is its Maker and Creator, but after its creation whatever is reaching anyone or anything in it and the way the world is being sustained and preserved is, also, directly from Him. Even the nourishment the trees are deriving apparently from air, water and soil and the milk an infant sucks from the breasts of its mother are nothing but the instances of the beneficent care of God who is our sole Sustainer and Nourisher. In other words, it is not that after bringing the world into creation, God has allocated the function of its preservation and sustenance, i. e., the dispensation of its needs, to someone else, but just as He has created the Universe, He is, also, preserving it, and there is not a single particle in it which may not be bound up directly with Him for its maintenance.

The second and third Attributes spoken of in *Sura-i-Fateha*, that is, Graciousness and Mercifulness denote that God is not the fearful embodiment of power and fury as some people suppose, but Most Kind, Most Forgiving and Most Merciful. It is a measure of His Benevolence that He did not only create the world, but has also taken upon Himself the responsibility of its sustenance and preservation. He is so infinitely kind that after eulogizing Him as Most Gracious it was found necessary to add the appellation of 'Most Merciful' as well.

The fourth Attribute of the Ownership of the Day of Judgement indicates that God is not only Kind and Merciful, but, also, Just and Impartial and the full display of this Divine quality will take place on the Day of Final Requitel which will be meant, exclusively, for the doing of justice and apportionment of Reward and Punishment to His slaves. The Quran, by underlining this Attribute, has forewarned us not to be misled by the boundless Compassionateness of the Lord into assuming that He will not bring to book the sinners and the wrongdoers, and, like a mother who is forced by the innate weakness of her nature to extend her love even to an unworthy child, will shower His Benevolence upon them also. On the

contrary, together with being Most Gracious and Most Merciful, God is also the Dispenser of Justice and there is destined to come a phase of existence in which this Divine Attribute will be revealed in such a way that it will be devoted, wholly and in all respects, to the allotment of reward and punishment; that is, the world to come will not be one of earning and spending or prayer and fasting, but entirely of Requitel and Recompense. That is why, the Last Day has been described as the Day of Judgement.

The Quran has said so much about the Attributes of God in these three simple, introductory phrases that if one were to go to its depth, even this brief revelation would be found to be more than adequate. But since it is the last Book of Guidance from the Lord and no other Divine Message is going to be sent down after it, the holy Quran has not gone in for brevity while dwelling upon any of the more important issues like the present one. Light has been shed by it on Divine Attributes literally at thousands of places. We will take up here some of the relevant verses, and, for the convenience of the readers, arrange them under separate headings.

(A) GOD IS ALL-WISE, ALL-KNOWING

The Quran asserts that everything that takes place in the world, whether big or small or hidden or manifest, is in the knowledge of God. He is present everywhere and sees and hears everything that is said or done.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَخْفَىٰ عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

God (is All-knowing): Nothing in the earth or in the heavens is hidden from Him. (—III: 5).

وَهُوَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّكُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ وَيَعْلَمُ الْكَلِيمَ

He is Allah in the heavens and in the earth (i. e., He is the Lord, Creator and the Sustainer of all that exists in the heavens and on the earth), He knoweth all your hidden and visible things and He knoweth what you do. (—VI: 3).

مَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ

He is the Knower of the invisible and the visible, He is the Wise and the Aware. (—VI: 74).

وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ۚ وَهُوَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْعِزَّةُ الْأُولَى وَالْآخِرَةُ

وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

And thy Lord knoweth what their breasts conceal, and what they do openly. And He is Allah; there is no God save Him. His is all praise in this world as well as in the Hereafter, and His is the Command and unto Him will ye be brought back. (—XXVIII: 69-70).

لَا تَعْمَلُونَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ إِلَّا كُنَّا عَلَيْكُمْ شُهُودًا إِذْ تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ ۚ وَمَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِثْقَالٍ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

And you perform no act but (that) We (are present there) and are Witness of you when you are engaged therein (i. e., whatever you do, you do it before Our eyes and although you do not see Us, We are present and witnessing everything). And not an atom's weight in the earth or in the sky escapeth the notice of your Lord. (—X: 62).

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ

And (O Mohammad) when My servants question you concerning Me, then (tell them) surely I am nigh. (—II: 186).

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ ۚ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ

We verily created man and We know what his soul whispereth to him, and We are nearer to Him than his jugular vein. (—L: 16).

مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ نَجْوَى ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا آدْنَى مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرُ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كَانُوا

There is no secret conference of three but He is their fourth nor of five but he is their sixth, nor of less than that or more but He is with them, wheresoever they may be. (—LVIII: 7).

Speaking, in *Sura-i-Nissa*, of those who fight shy of men but not of God, the Quran remarks:

يَخْتَفُونَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَخْتَفُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ

They fight shy of men and do not fight shy of Allah, although He is with them all the time and everywhere. (—IV: 108).

Apart from the afore-mentioned verses, expressions like *Aleem* (Knowing), *Khabeer* (Well-informed), *Sami* (Hearing), *Baseer* (Seeing), *Shaheed* (Witness) and *Muheet* (All-embracing) have been used at innumerable places in the Quran to define and explain the Divine Attribute of Omniscience. The sum and substance of all these verses is that God is All-wise and Well-informed. His knowledge is Infinite; there is absolutely nothing—no thought, deed or circumstance—that may be hidden from Him.

(B) GOD IS OMNIPOTENT, ALL-POWERFUL

Like the Omniscience of God, the holy Quran has dwelt upon His Omnipotence and All-powerfulness also in so many ways and at so many places that it is not easy to specify. Verses like, *Verily! God has Power over all things*, and *God is Able to do all things* occur over and over again in it and there are numerous other verses as well in which the Absoluteness of His Power and Authority has been asserted in the clearest possible terms, as for instance:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّ أَشْيَاءَكُمْ وَهَاتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ۚ وَمَا ذَلِكُ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ

Do you not see and do you not know that Allah hath created the heavens and the earth in truth (i. e., as they ought to have been),

and (it lies in His power that) if He willeth, He can remove you and bring (in your place) a new creation; and that is no great matter with Allah? (XIV: 19-20).

وَلَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَلِيًّا ۖ
إِنْ يَشَاءُ يُدْهِبْكُمْ أَتَمًّا
وَيَأْتِ بِآخَرِينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ قَدِيرًا ۝

Unto Allah belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. And Allah is sufficient as Protecting Friend. O People, if He likes, He can remove you, and bring in others (in your stead). Allah is Able to do that. (—IV: 133-34).

قُلْ إِيَّاكُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مَتَاعَكُمْ وَابْصَادَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيَكُمْ بِهِ

(O Prophet) ! Say: Have you imagined if Allah should take away your hearing and your sight and seal your hearts; who is the God who can restore it to you save Allah? (—VI: 46).

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ۖ فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي يَبْدِئُ مَخْلُوقَاتِ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَيُعِيدُهُنَّ

His way is that when He intendeth a thing, He saith unto it: Be! And it is. Therefore, Glory be to Him in whose hand is the dominion over all things! Unto Him ye will be brought back. (—XXXVI: 81-82).

وَمَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ لِيُجْزَاهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيمًا قَدِيرًا ۝

Allah is not such that ought in the heavens or in the earth escapeth (His Power and Authority). Lo! He is the Wise, the Mighty. (—XXXV: 44).

In conclusion, among the truths the sacred Quran seeks particularly to teach mankind about Allah and His Excellent Attributes one, also, is that He is Supreme in His Power and Authority and can do whatever He pleases in the heavens and on the earth. He does not stand in the need of anyone's help

for carrying out His Will. He is All-powerful. God, also, does not require any tools or implements. He is Absolute, the Almighty. He can make anything happen at His Will and Command. He can change the existent into non-existent, and the non-existent into existent.

(C) GOD IS THE CREATOR, THE SUSTAINER, THE NOURISHER AND THE PRESERVER OF ALL THINGS

The Quran, further, asserts and wants us to believe that God has not only created the universe and brought forth the existent from the non-existent, but is, also, running the entire workshop of the world and controlling its destiny alone and without a colleague or partner. Life and sustenance and whatever one is getting in the world by way of the means to one's existence are solely from Him. He is the Giver of all things and save Him there is no one who may have a control over life or its maintenance. He it is who grants to us what He likes and as long as He likes, and withholds from us what He wants to withhold.

الْأَلَهُ الْخَلْقِ وَالْأَمْرِ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝

Lo! His, verily, is all creation and commandment. Blessed be Allah, the Lord of the Worlds! (—VII: 54).

اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ۖ لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

Allah is Creator of all things, and He is Guardian over all things. His are (the treasures and) the keys of the heavens and the earth. (—XXXIX: 62-63).

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ رَزَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ شَرِكٍ لَهُ
مَنْ يَفْعَلُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَنُحْنَدُ نَعْنُ عَمَّا يَتْرُكُونَ ۝

Allah is He who created you and then sustained you, then He causeth you to die, then giveth life to you again. Is there any of your

(so called) partners (of Allah) that doth ought of that ? Praised and Exalted be He above that they associate (with Him). (XXX : 40).

فَاطْرُ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ
أَزْوَاجًا يَذُرُوكُمْ فِيهِ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ
السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَمْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

The Creator of the heavens and the earth. He hath made for you pairs of yourselves, and of the cattle also pairs, whereby He multiplieth you. Naught is as His likeness; He is the Hearer, the Seer, (He hears everyone and sees everything). His are (the treasures and keys) of the heavens and the earth. He enlargeth provision for whom He will and straiteneth it (for whom He will). Lo! He is the Knower of all things. (—XLII: 11-12).

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ وَ
سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الْفُلْكَ لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الْأَنْهَارَ ۖ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَائِبَيْنِ
وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۖ وَأَتاكم مِنْ كُلِّ شَاةٍ لَمْ تُؤْمَرُوا ۖ وَإِنْ تَعَدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا ۗ
إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ ۝

Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth, and causeth water to descend from the sky, thereby producing fruits as food for you, and maketh the ship to be of service unto you, that they may run upon the sea at His Command, and hath made of service unto you the rivers (whose water you use in several ways and in which you ply your boats); And maketh the sun and the moon, constant in their courses, to be of service unto you, the night and the day; (And He Hath not created only these things for you but, apart from them), He giveth unto you all ye ask of Him (or stand in need of), (the entire design of your existence is functioning by His Grace); so boundless are His favours (upon you that) if you were to count the bounty of Allah, you cannot reckon it. Lo! man is verily unjust and ungrateful. (—XIV : 32-34).

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ۝ وَهُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ۝ وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَلَهُ اخْتِلَافُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ۝

It is Allah Who hath created for you ears (to hear) and eyes (to see) and hearts (to feel). (But) ye give small thanks to Him. It is He who hath (in this life) multiplied you on the earth and spread you on it, (and on your return from here) it is unto Him that ye will be gathered. He it is Who giveth life and causeth death (i. e., life and death are solely in His hands), and His is the difference of night and day. Have ye, then, no sense (and do you not think at all what your attitude should be towards your Lord, Creator and Benefactor) ! (—XXIII: 78-80).

أَنَّهُ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ وَرَزَقَكُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبِ ذَٰلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُم فَتَبَرَّكُوا لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾

Allah it is Who appointed for you the earth for a dwelling place and the sky for a canopy, and fashioned you and perfected your shapes, and hath provided you with good things. Such is Allah, your Lord. Then blessed be Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. (—XL: 64).

قُلْ اَعِيْذُ بِاللّٰهِ اَبْعَثْنِيْ رُسُلًا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

ay: shall I seek another than Allah for Lord, when He is the Lord of all things? (—VI: 164).

فَبِئْسَ الْخَمْدُ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَرَبُّ الْأَرْضِ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝ وَلَهُ الْكِبَرُ بِمَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝

Then praise be to Allah, (no one besides Him is worthy of praise): (It is He alone who is), the Lord of the heavens and the Lord of the earth, the Lord of the Worlds. And unto Him (alone) belongeth Majesty in the heavens and the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. (-XLV : 36-37).

(D) GOD IS THE OWNER OF SOVEREIGNTY, THE KING OF KINGS: HE ALONE HAS POWER OVER ALL THAT EXISTS

Another Attribute of God which the Quran never tires of emphasising, is that He is the Lord Sovereign of the universe, the King of Kings, who holds in the palm of His hand the treasures of this world and the next.

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَلِكُ الْمَلِكِ تَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْمَلِكِ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ يُبْدِلُ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝

Say: O God! Owner of Sovereignty. Thou givest Power (and Rule) to whom Thou pleasest, and Thou strippest off Power (and Rule) from whom Thou pleasest. Thou enduest with honour whom Thou pleasest, and Thou bringest low whom Thou pleasest. In Thy hand is all good. Over all things Thou hast power. (—III: 26).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ۝

Knoweth ye not that unto Allah belongeth the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He quickeneth and He giveth death. And ye have, instead of Allah, no Protecting Friend or Helper. (—IX: 116).

يُلْقِي الْمُلْكَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝

Unto Allah belongeth the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and whatever is contained therein. He has Power over all things. (—V: 120).

لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُخْلِقُ مَا يَشَاءُ يَهْدِي لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ إِنْ أَرَادَ إِلَهُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ الذُّكُورَ أَوْ يَزْوَاجَهُمْ ذَكَرًا أَوْ أُنثَىٰ وَيَعْمَلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ عَاقِبَةً إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝

Unto Allah belongeth the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He createth what He will. He bestoweth male (offspring) upon

whom He will, and bestoweth female (offspring) upon whom He will: or, He minglETH them, males and females, and He maketh barren whom He will. Lo! He is the Knower, the Powerful. (—XLII: 49-50)

فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ ۝

Now, Exalted be Allah, the True King! There is no God save Him, the Lord of the Throne of Grace. (—XXIII: 116).

ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ دُعَاءَكُمْ وَلَا يَسْتَجِيبُونَ لَكُمْ وَتَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُونَ بَشِيرِكُمْ وَلَا يُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ خَيْرٍ مِنَّا يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْغَنِيُّ الْمُسْتَعِينُ ۝ إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ وَمَا ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ ۝

Such is Allah, your Lord; His the Sovereignty; and those unto whom ye pray instead of Him do not possess even so much power as the white spot on a datestone. If ye pray unto them they hear not your prayer, and even if they hear they could not grant it to you, (they cannot be of any help to you), and on the Day of Resurrection they will disown association with you. None can inform you like Him Who is Aware, Knowing. O mankind! You are all powerless in relation to Allah (and in need of Him). And Allah! He is the Absolute, (He does not stand in need of anyone or anything), and the Owner of Praises. (All praise is for Him). Everything lies in His Power. If He pleases, He can be rid of you (in a moment) and bring (instead of you) some new creation. There is nothing difficult in it for Allah. (—XXXV: 13-17).

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ

He unto whom belongeth the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth, He hath chosen no son, nor hath He any partner in Sovereignty (and Rule). (—XXV: 2).

Sometimes, the Quran adopts the negative method to lay stress on the Absoluteness of the Sovereignty of God by denying that there is anyone, save Him, in the whole world who may have anything in his power or control. Besides Him, all others are totally helpless and can do neither any harm nor good to anyone.

قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَعْصِيكُمْ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوءًا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً
وَلَا يَجِدُونَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا

Say (to the unbelievers): Who is he who can preserve you from Allah if He intendeth harm for you, or intendeth mercy for you? They will not find that they have any Friend or Helper other than Allah. (—XXXIII: 17).

مَا يَنْفَعُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا وَمَا يُمْسِكُ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ
وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

That which Allah openeth unto mankind of mercy, none can withhold it: and that which He withholdeth, none can release thereafter. He is the Mighty, the Wise. (—XXXV: 2).

قُلْ إِنْ أَرَادْتُمْ أَنْ اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ وَابْصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيَكُمْ بِهِ

Say: Have ye imagined if Allah should take away your hearing and your sight and seal your hearts (i. e., should He take away from you your capacity for thinking and understanding and mystify your minds), who is the God who could restore it to you save Allah? (—VI: 64).

أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي يَرْزُقُكُمْ إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهُ

Who is he that can provide for you if Allah were to withhold His Providence? (—LXVII: 21).

قُلْ إِنْ أَرَادْتُمْ أَنْ اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ وَابْصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيَكُمْ بِهِ

Say: Have ye thought: if all your water (that you draw from the wells) were to disappear (i. e., should Allah make it vanish), who then can bring it to you gushing from the earth? (—LXVII: 30).

(E) GOD IS MOST KIND, MOST FORGIVING, MOST MERCIFUL

We have seen earlier how in the pre-Islamic times some religious communities were caught in the delusion about God that He was something of a tyrant whom it was extremely hard to please, at least for the common people. For the sinners and defaulters He had nothing but anger and punishment, and even if He was kind and benevolent, it was only in relation to a particular family, race or community, otherwise for the rest of mankind He was utterly ruthless.

The same misunderstanding was responsible for the polytheism of these peoples. They looked unto themselves and found that their lives were not free from the stigma of sin; they, also, felt that it was beyond them to lead a pure and sinless life in this world, and from it they were misled by their ignorance into believing that since God was so cruel and unrelenting they could not hope for any compassion or leniency from Him. They despaired of the mercy of God and supposed themselves to be irretrievably lost. In moments of despondency and frustration, the Devil put it in their hearts that among the creatures of God there were certain beings who, by virtue of their piety or spiritual excellence, had acquired a great closeness of association with Him and God had delegated a good measure of His functions and authority to them. These august beings, also, did not possess the severity and wrathfulness of God, and it was, therefore, far more easy to win their good graces. Sinners and trespassers like them could find protection under the benign shadow of those favourites of the Lord and save themselves from His anger and punishment by offering devotion to them and entering into their good books. Such a course appeared to be

easier to these communities, and, having lost hope in God, they began to worship the real or fictitious personalities the Devil had suggested to them and to offer up oblations in their name in the expectation that under their protective wings they will thrive and, also, remain sheltered against the consequences of Divine displeasure in the life to come.

A critical study of the spiritual evolution of the polytheistic communities and the growth and development of their beliefs and practices will bear out that most of them were led astray simply because they failed to appreciate the true meaning and significance of Divine Attribute of Beneficence and Forgiveness and mistook God to be a pitiless taskmaster in the manner of a worldly tyrant, and, in the upshot, they lost faith in Him and made the holy spirits and other deities set up before them by the Devil the symbols of their hope and aspirations. Had they been aware of His Infinite Kindness and Mercifulness they would, never have fallen into this error.

For this very reason, the sacred Quran which marks the ultimate word of Celestial Guidance for humanity has attached an extraordinary importance to this aspect of Divinity and laid stress, at hundreds of places, on the Benignity, Graciousness and Clemency of God and His limitless Love and Affection for His creatures. Those who are lucky enough to recite the Quran will be knowing how frequently has God been remembered in it by His Attributive Names like those of Forgiving and Merciful, Clement and Merciful, Relenting and Merciful, Best of all those that are Merciful, and Most Merciful among those that are Merciful. The limit is that in *Bismillah* itself, i. e., the phrase which adorns the Quran at the head of its text, we find an emphatic affirmation of the Beneficence and Compassionateness of God, and, in the same way, as we come to the inaugural verses we are struck by the fact that His Attribute of Graciousness and Mercifulness are set forth unambiguously before everything else. The opening chapter of the Quran, thus, begins with these lines:

Parise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Now, let us take up a few more verses:

وَالْهَكَمُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

Your God is One God: there is no God save Him, the Beneficent, the Merciful. (—II: 163).

In *Sura-i-Aal-i-Imran*, after describing how on the Day of Judgement men will be confronted with a full account of the good and evil deeds they had done in their lifetime and everyone will be seized with fear at the thought of the Recompense that was going to be handed out to him, it is set forth that:

وَيَحْيِىْ زَكَرِيَّا نَفْسَهُ وَاللَّهُ نَهْدُكَ بِالْعِبَادِ

And Allah biddeth you to beware of Him. Allah is full of pity for (His) bondmen. (—III: 30).

The Quran indicates that the warning of Final Requital administered by God to His bondmen is, also, prompted by His Kindness and Compassion in the same way in which a loving father cautions his children against the evil consequences of taking to wrong ways and falling into wicked habits and advises them to be good and dutiful.

اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ

Allah is Gracious unto His slaves. (—XLII: 19).

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ لَرَّوُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Verily, your Lord is Full of Pity, Merciful. (—XVI: 7).

In *Sura-i-Ana'm*, we are first assured that God is aware of

everything we do, and, then, we are told that :

رَبُّكَ الْغَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ إِنَّ يَشَاءُ مِنْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفُ مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ مَا يَشَاءُ

Thy Lord is the Absolute, the Lord of Mercy. (It is simply because of His Mercifulness that you are alive in spite of all your evil deeds, otherwise) He can remove you and can cause what He will to follow after you on the earth. (—VI: 134).

Similarly, in *Sura-i-Kahf*, we have it that :

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ لَوْ يُؤْخَذُ هُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا الْعَجَلُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بَلْ لَهُمْ مَوْعِدٌ لَنْ يَجُودُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ مَوْيلًا

Thy Lord is the Forgiver, Full of Mercy. If He took them to task (now) for what they earn, He would hasten on the doom for them; but their's is an appointed term from which they will find no escape. (—XVIII: 59).

Which means that if we see around us that there are wicked and unrighteous men who commit all sorts of sins and transgressions against the laws of God and still they are alive and no punishment visits them from Above—neither the lightning strikes them down nor does the earth swallow them up—it is not due to any inconsistency in the dispensation of divine Justice, but in the nature of a benefaction emanating from the same Attributes of Kindness and Compassion. Had the Almighty not been so Forgiving and Merciful, these sinners and defaulters would have been brought to book by Him immediately without a chance being given to them to mend their ways. But since it is the will of God to treat His slaves with love and kindness, He has decided to grant a reprieve to the transgressors till the end of their lives so that if any of them should want, at any time, to earn His good pleasure by reforming and offering true repentance for their misdeeds, they can do so and save themselves from His chastisement. God, as such, has fixed the time for Judgement and Recompense at the end of man's earthly existence and when that hour will strike, every single soul will be produced before Him and no one will be able to avoid it by going into hiding or taking refuge somewhere.

Again, in *Sura-i-An'am*, we read :

كَتَبَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ

Allah hath prescribed for Himself mercy. (That is why, He does not punish the wrongdoers in this world. He has given them a lifetime of respite so that those who want to correct their ways and seek forgiveness may do so and save themselves from Punishment). He hath chosen to bring you all together (for Judgement and Requital) on a Day whereof there is no doubt. (—VI: 12).

Glory be ! How soothing, comforting and reassuring is the opening phrase of the verse quoted above : *Your Lord hath prescribed for Himself mercy !* If it is not heresy of the first order to despair of the mercy of such a benevolent Preserver, what else can it be ? In the same Chapter the following words of hope and good cheer have, again, been addressed to the holy Prophet, and in what a marvellous manner :

وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ أَنْذَرْتُكُمْ يَوْمَ تَمُوتُ وَتُنْفَخُ السُّوفَةُ أَيْبَحَالَةً تَتَلَبَّ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَإِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

And (O Prophet), when those who believe in Our revelations come unto thee (receive them with love and affection), (and) say : Peace be unto you : (and impart to them the joyful tidings that) your Lord hath prescribed for Himself mercy, (so rest assured) that whosoever of you doeth evil (due to ignorance) and repenteth afterward thereof and doeth right, then, verily, your Lord is Forgiving, Merciful. (—VI: 54).

Unfortunate, really, is the man who remains denied of the mercy of Lord, who after the salutation of Peace, sends this message of hope and compassion to His erring slaves through His beloved Apostle : "Do not despair of your Lord and do not run away from Him ; He has prescribed for Himself mercy. If you have sinned (out of weakness or ignorance), repent now, and mend your ways. He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful."

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

And He it is Who accepteth repentance from His (erring) bondmen, and pardoneth the evil deeds, and knoweth what ye do. (—XLII: 25)

About the erring servants who are guilty of a mortal sin like adultery and fornication, it is stated in *Sura-i-Nissa* that :

وَالَّذِينَ يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْكَ فَادُوهُمَا فَإِنْ تَابَا وَأَصْلَحَا فَأَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا

And as for the two of you who are guilty thereof (lewdness), punish them both. And if they repent and improve then let them be. Verily, Allah is Relenting, Merciful. (—IV: 16)

The Quran says that people against whom it is established that they have been guilty of lewdness should, of course, be punished according to law, but if, after they have undergone the punishment, they beg the forgiveness of God and reform themselves, they should be left alone and no ill-will should be borne against them for the Lord and Master against whom they had, in truth, sinned is Himself most Forgiving to those who repent after going astray and treats them with kindness.

And, Again :

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسًا ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

And whoso doeth evil and wrongeth his own soul, (then repenteth) and seeketh pardon of Allah, will find Him Forgiving, Merciful. (—IV: 11)

And, in *Sura-i-Zumar*, the loving and affectionate manner in which the unfortunate transgressors have been spoken to constitute such a magnificent proclamation of Divine Graciousness that even if a life-long sinner and an inveterate wrong-doer were to pay heed to it he would throw himself, with his heart and soul, at the door of His Forgiveness and Mercy.

قُلْ يَاعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلُمُوا لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمْ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ

O My slaves who have been prodigal to their own hurt (and ruined themselves with their own hands)! Despair not of the mercy

of Allah, Who forgiveth all sins. Verily, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. Turn (even now) unto Him repentant, and surrender unto Him, before there come upon you the Doom, and then no one can save you or come to your help. (—XXXIX: 53-54).

The foregoing verses from *Sura-i-Zumar*, as well as the verses we have reproduced above on the subject of the Mercifulness of the Lord towards His erring bondmen, go to show that while His Kindness is so boundless and infinite that even the worst of the sinners and defaulters can seek refuge in it, an essential prerequisite of proving oneself worthy of it is that a person should turn to Him earnestly, and resolve, with all sincerity, to make amends for his past mistakes.

Hence, at many places in the Quran a mention of the Divine Attribute of Justice and of handing out punishment to the defiant servants is, also, made side by side with the affirmation of His peerless qualities of Benevolence and Forgiveness, such as, in *Sura-i-Fateha* where, while God is described as the Lord of the Worlds, and Most Gracious and Most Merciful, it is added immediately that He is the Owner of the Day of the Judgement too. The object, obviously is to guard against the possibility of anyone presuming from the immensity and infinitude of Divine Compassion and Mercifulness that a free license has now been given to sinfulness and whatever one may do in life the gates of Forgiveness and Mercy will always remain open for him. Anyhow, it is for the purpose of removing this misunderstanding that attention has been drawn to the Divine Attribute of Justice together with those of Forgiveness and Compassion on various occasions in the Quran :

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ إِنِّي بَرَأءُكُمْ وَأَسَافَةُ أَعْيُنِكُمْ وَإِنَّ إِلَٰهَكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُمْ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَفْعَلَ بَكُم مِثْلَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

(O Prophet)! (If after these clear revelations) they still give lie to thee, tell them that your Lord is a Lord of all-embracing Mercy (and it is out of His Mercifulness that He has given this respite to you, but if you do not give up your sinful ways you will, surely, be punished for your wicked deeds) and His Wrath will not be withdrawn from the guilty folk. (—VI: 148)

يُنْصِرُ عِبَادِي أَنِّي أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ وَأَنَّ عَذَابِي هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْأَلِيمُ ۝

Announce, (O Mohammad), unto My slaves that verily I am the Forgiving, the Merciful, and, in the same way, (let there be no doubt about it) that My doom is the dolorous doom (for the transgressors). (—XV : 49-50)

غَافِرُ الذَّنْبِ وَقَابِلُ التَّوْبِ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ذِي الْقَوْلِ لَئِلَّا هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ ۝

Allah is the Forgiver of sin, the Acceptor of Repentance, (but for the defiant transgressors), stern in Punishment. The Bountiful. There is no God save Him. Unto Him we all return. (—XI : 3).

In some verses, like those given below, the Divine Attribute of Justice and handing out punishment to the guilty has been explained by setting forth the argument in an interrogatory form :

أَفَنَجْعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ ۚ مَا لَكُم كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ۚ

Shall we treat those who have surrendered as We treat the guilty? What aileth you? How foolishly ye judge? (i. e., How can you imagine such an unjust thing about God that He will deal identically with those who are obedient to Him and those who are not)? (—LXIX : 35-36).

وَمَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ ۚ

Shall We treat those who believe and do good works as those who spread corruption on the earth? Or, shall We treat the pious as the wicked? (—XXXVIII : 29).

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا الشَّيْءَ أَن نَّجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءً مَّا عَمِلُوا وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا بَيِّنَاتٍ ۚ وَخَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ وَلَئِذَا نُنْفِثُ الْبُرْجَ يَأْكُسُ بِمَا كَانَ يَتُكَبَّرُ ۚ وَمَا يَزِيدُهُ إِلَّا نُفُورًا ۚ

Or do those who commit ill-deeds suppose that We shall make them as those who do good works, the same in life and death? Bad, is the

judgement (of those who think like that). (Don't they see) that Allah hath created the heavens and the earth with truth? (Then how do they attribute such an injustice to Him?) The very purpose of the creation of this world is (that men may strive here), (and) that at the appointed time, every soul may be repaid what it has earned. And they will not be wronged (in Recompense). (XLVI : 21-22)

In sum, the sacred Quran informs that God is infinitely Gracious and Affectionate to His slaves and His Beneficence is so extensive that everybody can find a place in it: *My Mercy embraceth all things*—(VII : 156). He is always willing to forgive and take within the fold of His Mercy the worst of the criminals and the greatest of the sinners who may turn towards Him as seekers of Forgiveness and Compassion. But, at the sametime, He is also Just and His Sense of Justice demands that the arrogant transgressors should not go unpunished, and, in His Infinite Wisdom, He has decreed that it shall not be so. Hence, the wicked and the sinful who do not give up their evil ways and persist in wrongdoing and apostasy, in spite of the clearest guidance having come down to them from God, will have no share in the Mercy of their Lord in the Hereafter when the Divine Attribute of Justice will reveal itself in the completest measure. Says the Quran :

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذَكَرَ بآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى عَنْهَا ۚ إِنَّهَا رِثَاةٌ مِّنْهُنَّ مُتَتَّبِعُونَ ۚ

And who doth greater wrong than he who is reminded of the revelations of His Lord, then turneth away from them (and does not reform himself). We shall, verily, requite the guilty. (—XXXII : 22)

(F) GOD IS THE PURE, THE SUBLIME

The Quranic revelations we have discussed so far in this chapter were related to the positive Attributes of God. From these we learnt that God is Omniscient: His knowledge is Absolute and All-embracing, there is nothing big or small, hidden or manifest of which He is not aware; that God is Omnipotent: His Authority extends over the heavens and the

earth and all that is contained therein; that He is the Nourisher and Sustainer, the Lord and Preserver of everyone: the sovereignty of all that exists belongs to Him, nothing is beyond His Control; that God is Most Gracious, Most Merciful, but together with it, He is also Just and requites those that are faithful and virtuous with His choicest favours and bounties and punishes those that are wicked and sinful as befits His Power and Dignity.

But no discussion on the Divine Attributes can be complete if it concerns itself only with WHAT GOD IS and does not deal, also, with WHAT HE IS NOT. We, therefore, now proceed to enquire into how God is absolutely free from the things that are derogatory to His Glory and Magnificence and about which the ignorant and the uninformed have been guilty of error or misjudgement in the past or are likely to be in future. The Quran has not contented itself merely with a narration of the positive Attributes of Divinity, but its other aspect, that of Purity and Sublimity, that is, freedom from what is ascribed to Him out of folly or ignorance is, also, brought out fully in it. A few verses relevant to our study are given below:

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلِيٌّ
مِّنَ الدِّينِ وَكَبِيرٌ يُكَبِّرُهُ

And say: Praise be to Allah, Who hath not taken unto Himself a son, and Who hath no partner in Sovereignty, nor hath He any protecting friend through dependence. And magnify Him with all magnificence. (—XVIII: 3)

مُجْتَبًى وَتَعَلَّى بَنَاتُهُنَّ بِحُجُوبٍ وَالْأَرْضُ كُلُّهَا لَدَيْهِ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي السَّحَابُ وَتَكُونُ لَهُ سُلَاطَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
مَّا خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ يُجِزِّي وَيُغْنِي ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمُ ۚ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ۝

Glorified be He and high exalted above all that they ascribe unto Him (such as, He has a partner or a son or a daughter). He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth (and these benighted people know that such is the Glory of no one save Him and yet

they indulge in the fallacies of this kind). How can He have a child when there is for Him no consort, when He created all things, and is aware of all things? Such is Allah, your Lord. There is no God save Him, the Creator of all things, so worship Him. And He taketh care of all things (—VI: 100-102)

And, then, that:

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْبَاصِرَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ

Vision comprehendeth Him not, but He comprehendeth all vision. He is the Subtile, the Aware. (—VI: 103)

The above verses contain an emphatic refutation of all things that are unworthy of Divine Magnificence and Sublimity, and God is shown in them to be supremely free from what the Polytheists and others with an imperfect understanding of His Glory and Uniqueness are prone to impute to Him. The last of the truths asserted by the Quran with regard to the Purity of God, (*Vision comprehendeth Him not, but He comprehendeth all vision*) stands out as a marve of lelegance, comprehensiveness and perfection. It denotes that God is so Infinite, Exalted and Subtile that although He is present everywhere and is so very near to everyone all the time, no eye can see Him. He, on His part, sees everything.

At another place, the whole discussion on this aspect of Divinity has been summed up in just two words which, when translated into English, read: *Naught is as His likeness*. (—XLII: 11).

Look at this brief phrase! In a couple of words the Quran has said in it everything that could be said on the subject of Divine Sublimity, and proclaimed Him to be above and beyond all the things that are not in keeping with His lofty Attributes of Sacredness and Purity. It is clear that all the mistakes that are, or have been, committed in this respect originate from the fact that people are inclined to imagine about God and His Functions and Attributes on the basis of the nature, functions and attributes of the known things of the material world. The

Quran has struck at the root of the dangerous tendency by declaring that God is simply unique, unmatched and unparalleled: *Naught is as His likeness*. He is Incomparable. No one is like Him and He is like no one. He is present, but His presence is not like that of the other existing things; he is alive, but there is nothing in common between His life and the life of the other living things. He is All-knowing, All-hearing and All-seeing, but His knowing, hearing and seeing transcend our own faculties of the same order. He is close to everyone, and by the side of everybody. But this closeness has nothing to do with what is found between any two persons or objects in the world. The same is, also, true of His Attributes of Compassion, Love, Anger and Revenge which are fundamentally different from our own emotional responses to identical situations. The Quran has sealed the door permanently against all confusion through the simple and straightforward declaration. Once for all, it has rejected the various things the unenlightened people were inclined to associate with God because of exemplification.

SOME COMPREHENSIVE VERSES OF THE QURAN

We will bring the discussion on Divine Attributes to a close by reproducing a few verses of the Quran which are of a comprehensive nature and deal with all the manifold aspects and distinctive qualities of Godhead:

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah; There is no God except Him, the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. (His life, alone, is His; the others are alive by His grace. The world is being sustained by His command). No slumber can seize Him, nor sleep. (He is always wide awake and alert). His are all the things in the heavens and on the earth. (He is the sole

monarch of all that exists). Who is he who can intercede in His Presence save by His leave? (No one can dare do so). He knoweth that which is in front of them (His bondmen), and that which is behind them! While (His creatures) shall encompass nothing of His knowledge except as He willeth. (They can know only what He wants them to know). His throne extends over the heavens and the earth and He is never weary of guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, Supreme (in Glory). (—II: 255)

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝ هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ۝ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلْبِغُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ مَكْرُومٌ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifieth Allah; He is the Mighty, the Wise; His is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth; He quickeneth and He giveth death (to whom He willeth). (Life and death are in His hands). And He is able to do all things. He is the First and the Last, (He was Present when no one save Him was present and He will be Present when all save Him will perish), and the Manifest and the Hidden, (He is so Manifest that those who possess the meanest of intellect can know Him and so Hidden that no eye can see Him); And He is the Knower of all things. He it is who created the heavens and the earth in six days (i. e., in six rounds); then He mounted the Throne. He knoweth all that entereth the earth and all that emergeth therefrom and all that cometh down from the sky and all that ascendeth therein; and He is wheresoever you may be. And Allah sees everything that ye do. (—LVII: 1-4)

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالْكَهَادَةِ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ هُوَ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقَدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهِمِّنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ ۝ سُبْحَنَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ۝ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

He is Allah, than whom there is no other God, the Knower of the visible and the invisible. He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. He

is Allah, than Whom there is no other God, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, (He is free from all impurity), Peace, (there is no danger for Him, nor decline), the Keeper of Faith, the Giver of Shelter, (no one can exert any pressure or influence upon Him), the Superb. Glorified be Allah from all that they ascribe as Partner unto Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Shaper out of naught, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and on the earth glorifieth Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. (—LIX : 22-24)

After these detailed expositions of the Attributes of God, read this short but most fascinating affirmation contained in *Sura-i-Ekhlās* :

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۝ اللَّهُ الْهَمْدُ ۝ لَمْ يَلِدْ ۝ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ۝
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ۝

Say : He is Allah, the One (and only God)! Allah, (the Externally) Besought of all! He begetteth not, nor was begotten. And there is none comparable to him. (—CXII)

For a person who believes in God and considers himself to be His bondsman it is natural to be desirous of cultivating a correct understanding of His Creator and knowing about Him all that can be known. It is, also, beyond dispute that the most correct, complete and authentic knowledge about the Divine Attributes is contained in the holy Quran which imparts to the hearts a living consciousness of His Power and Majesty and releases in them the undying springs of love and devotion for Him. In consequence, the seeking of Divine pleasure becomes the chief ambition of one's life, than which there can be no greater success or felicity for man.

CHAPTER III

DIVINE UNITY

From the Quranic statements on Divine Attributes, referred to in the foregoing pages, we have learnt about God that He is All-knowing : He knows what is apparent as well as what is hidden ; He is Omnipresent ; He is the Creator and Sustainer of the Worlds and the Master and Preserver of the universe, and whatever is happening here is at His command and bidding ; all the Glory and Greatness belongs to Him and He is free from want and does not stand in need of anything : everyone is dependent upon Him and He is dependent on no one ; He is Most Kind and Merciful, but, at the sametime, He is Just and Fair and is going to requite everyone for the good or evil he may have done in his earthly life. In addition to it, we have, also, seen that God is higher and superior to everything that may bear the faintest trace of a fault or weakness or be derogatory to His Attributes of Purity and Sublimity.

Once it is accepted that there is someone who is so superlatively perfect and in whom all these splendid virtues are assembled in their most evolved and immaculate form it follows automatically that He alone is worthy of our obedience and submission, and, besides Him, there is no one who may be worshipped. All His wishes should be carried out with reverence, and regarding Him to be our Maker and Master and ourselves His humble slaves, we must obey His commands and injunctions faithfully and without question. We are to look forward only to His help, to supplicate to no one save Him for our needs, and to make Him alone the centre of our hopes and desires and trust and reliance. He is the one towards the earning of whose good graces we should always strive and for the sake of whose pleasure it should be our duty to live and die. We should adore no one but Him, celebrate only His praises, and make His remembrance the chief occupation of our lives.

It is because of this that often during the discussion on Divine Attributes in the Quran the concept of TAWHEED (Divine Unity) has been treated as an accepted fact and a self-evident reality, as the readers themselves would have noticed while going through some of the verses reproduced in the earlier chapter. There may, as such, appear to be no need now to enter into a full length study of it, but since this concept forms the central theme of the message of the Quran and the pivot of its teachings, and, in the earlier scriptures, also, the greatest stress was laid on the Oneness of God and more importance was attached to it than to any other question, we have decided to devote a separate chapter to the examination of the Quranic viewpoint on it.

The teachings of the Quran on TAWHEED are so clear and exhaustive that no aspect of it has been left in the dark. It was, also, necessary for them to be so for this issue has led to the undoing of many a people, at all stages of history. It would not be incorrect to say that more mistakes have been committed on this score than in respect of any other article of spiritual belief although all the Prophets and genuine religious preachers had consistently informed their followers that there was no God but one God and He alone was worthy of worship and obedience. The Quran positively asserts that no people or community in the world has been left without the message of Divine Unity having been conveyed to it by the august Apostles of the Lord.

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

And verily We have raised in every nation a Messenger (proclaiming): serve Allah and shun false gods. (—XVI : 36)

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِي

And We have sent no Messenger before thee but We inspired him (saying): there is no God save Me (Allah), so worship Me (alone). (—XXI : 25)

In every community the Prophets raised up by God have uniformly preached the gospel of Divine Oneness, but with the passage of time, a majority of them slipped back into Polytheism, and even now the position with most of the people is that while they believe in God and affirm their faith in Him, they are guilty of entertaining and upholding Polytheistic beliefs and practices in one form or another.

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

And most of them believe in Allah and, (at the sametime), attribute partners unto Him. (—XII : 106)

Polytheism, in any case, has been the commonest and most grievous failing of mankind and it is precisely for this reason that the Quran has given so much importance to the doctrine of TAWHEED and made it the principal theme of its teachings. In the Quran, moreover, every possible effort has been made to eliminate the causes that had given rise to Polytheism in the earlier communities and ensure against the likelihood of its emergence in future.

The Quran does not content itself merely with proclaiming that God is One and He alone should be adored and worshipped, but in addition to stressing the Unity of Being, it takes up every Attribute of the Lord and declares that it belongs solely to Him and just as He is One and Unpartnered in His nature and existence, in His authority and attributes, too, He is unique and without an equal or co-sharer. The Quran has dealt with all these aspects of TAWHEED with such clarity and thoroughness that it has, now, become completely fortified against pollution by any kind of Polytheistic untruths, open or hidden, and conceptual or practical.

We shall now arrange some of the Quranic verses concerning Monotheism in different sections and under separate titles.

(A) UNITY OF BEING

A most simple, forthright and comprehensive enunciation of the concept of TAWHEED is that God is just One and no one aside of Him is worthy of obedience or worship.

وَالْهَكَمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

Your God is One God ; there is no God save Him, the Beneficent, the Merciful. (—II : 163)

وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ الْعِزَّةُ الْحَكِيمُ

There is no God save Allah, and lo ! Allah is the Mighty, the Wise. (—III : 62)

إِنَّ الْهَكَمُ لَوَاحِدٌ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا

Lo ! Thy Lord is surely One ; Lord of the heavens and of the earth and all that is between them. (—XXXVII : 4-5)

قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ

Say (O Prophet) : He is only One God, and Lo ! I am innocent of that which ye associate with Him. (—VI : 19)

قَالَ الْهَكَمُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَلَهُ أَسْلِمُ

Your God is One God. (Then) surrender unto Him. (—XXII : 34)

(B) UNITY OF FUNCTIONS AND ATTRIBUTES

Besides this simple affirmation of the Unity of God in His Being the Quran insists that He is One and Absolute in His functions and attributes as well. He is the sole Creator

and Nourisher of all existing things and it is He alone who gives life and causes death.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ رَزَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ شَرِكَايَكُم مَّنْ يَفْعَلُ مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ سُبْحَنَهُ وَعَلَىٰ عَمَائِكُمْ كُونَ

Allah is He Who created you and then sustained you, and then causeth you to die, then giveth life to you again. Is there any of your (so-called) partners of Allah that does (or can do) any of these things? Praised and Exalted be He above what they associate with Him. (—XXXV : 40)

مَبْلٌ مِنْ خَالِقِي غَيْرِ اللَّهِ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ قَاتِي تَوْكَوُونَ

Is there any creator other than Allah who provideth for you from the sky and the earth? There is no God save Him ! Whither, then, are ye turned ? (—XXXV : 3)

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ شُرَكَاءَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ

Tell about your partner-gods to whom ye pray beside Allah, show me what they created on the earth ? Or have they any share in the heaven ? (—XXXV : 40)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا فَابْتَغُوا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الرِّزْقَ وَاعْبُدُوهُ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

Lo ! Those whom ye serve instead of Allah own no provision for you. So seek your provision from Allah and serve Him, and give thanks unto Him (for) unto Him ye will be brought back. (—XXIX : 17)

(i) To God belongs all Power: His Command runs over the whole world

The heavens and the earth and all that is contained therein are under the sovereignty of the Lord, and the way He is the Creator and Sustainer of everyone, His writ alone runs over all things and at all times.

آلَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ

His verily is all creation and commandment. (—VII : 54)

دَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

His is the command (over all things), and unto Him ye will be brought back. (—XXVIII : 70)

God alone has the power over all things; He does what He pleases. Besides Him nothing is in the hands of anyone, neither life nor death nor disease nor health nor poverty nor riches. Of the depraved and the uninformed who imagine about their favourite deities that they, too, have a share in the management of the world, the Quran protests that they are totally in the wrong. Even if these false gods, holy spirits and saints all got together they could not do anything on their own—they could not even create an ant or a fly or come to anyone's aid or change the course of his destiny.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

Lo ! Allah ! Unto Him belongeth the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. He granteth life and He giveth death. And ye have, instead of Allah, no protecting friend or helper. (—IX : 116)

ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ مَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِن قِطْمِيرٍ

Such is Allah, your Lord : His is the Sovereignty ; and those unto whom ye pray instead of Him own not so much as the white spot on a date stone. (XXXV : 13)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَن يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ

Verily, those on whom ye call beside Allah will never create a fly though they combine together for the purpose. (—XXII : 73)

قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيهَا مِن شِرْكٍ وَمَا لَهُ مِنْهُمْ قُرْبَنٌ ظَاهِرٌ

Say (O Mohammad) : Call upon those whom ye set up beside Allah (as your helpers and the dispensers of your needs) ! They possess not an atom's weight either in the heavens or the earth nor have they any share in either, nor hath He an auxilliary among them. (—XXXIV : 22)

قُلْ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَادَنِيَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ هَلْ هُنَّ كَاشِفَاتُ ضُرِّي أَوْ إِنْ أَرَادَنِيَ بِرَحْمَةٍ هَلْ هُنَّ مُمْسِكَاتُ رَحْمَتِي قُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

Say : Bethink you then of those ye worship beside Allah. If Allah willed some hurt for me, could they remove from me His hurt : or, if He willed some mercy for me, could they restrain His mercy ? (Never !) Say : Allah is my all. In Him do (all) the trusting put their trust. (—XXXIX : 38)

أَمَّا اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ آلَاءَ اللَّهِ هُوَ الْوَلِيُّ

Have they chosen Protecting Friends besides Him ? But, Allah, He (alone) is the Protecting Friend. (—XLII : 9)

(ii) God is He who is keeping the universe intact

It is God alone who, without the partnership or co-operation of anyone, is keeping the entire scheme of the heaven and the earth intact and holding it in the palm of His hand. Were He to leave the universe alone for a moment there was no one who could grasp it or prevent it from flying into pieces.

لَئِنْ لَمْ يُمْسِكِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَافْتَرَاكَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مَنْ بَعْدِهِ

Allah graspeth the heavens and the earth that they deviate not, and if they were to deviate there is no one that could grasp them after Him. (—XXXV : 41).

(iii) God alone is Eternal: all the rest is transitory

The real life, the life that knows no end, is for God alone. He is the Eternal. the Everlasting. All the rest is transitory.

هُوَ الْحَيُّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ

He is the Living One (for Whom there is no death). There is no God save Him. (—XL : 65)

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ

Everything will perish save Him. (—XXVIII : 88)

(iv) God is Omniscient: He alone has the knowledge of the unseen

God is Omniscient, the All-knowing. Whatever there is in the heavens and the earth, visible or invisible, is known to Him. Nothing is concealed from His view. He is aware of all things.

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ

Allah knoweth that which is in front of (His creatures) and that which is behind them, while they encompass nothing of His knowledge save what He willeth. (—II : 255)

لَهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَبْصِرْ بِهِ وَأَسْمِعْ

He knoweth what is invisible in the heavens and the earth. (He knows all the secrets and all the things that are hidden). How clear of sight is He and keen of hearing ! (—XVIII : 26)

قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

Say (Mohammad) : None in the heavens and the earth knoweth the Unseen save Allah. (Allah alone has the knowledge of what is hidden). (—XXVII : 65)

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُ إِلَّا هُوَ

And with Him are the keys of the invisible. None but He knoweth them. (—VI : 59)

(C) UNITY OF RIGHTS

After describing the Oneness and Uniqueness of God in His Being, Power and Authority, the Quran goes on to affirm that in His rights, too, He is supreme and unequalled. The claims He has on us are not shared by anyone; they belong only to Him.

Allah alone is worthy of praise. He alone is to be loved and feared, to be relied upon and looked forward to for help and protection. He is the real Lord and Sovereign; His law is the real law which is to be observed above all else. Only He has the right to lay down the Shariat. He it is who hears our prayers and grants our supplications. All our entreaties,

requests and invocations must be addressed solely to Him. He is the Absolute, the Worshipped One. We should adore Him alone and associate no one with Him.

(i) All praise is for God

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ۝

And He is Allah: there is no God save Him. His is all praise in the former and the later (state). (—XXVII : 74)

فَبِلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ رَبِّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَرَبِّ الْأَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝ وَلَهُ الْكِبَرِيَاءُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۝ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝

Then praise be to Allah, Lord of the heavens and Lord of the earth, the Lord of the Worlds. And unto Him (alone) belongeth Majesty in the heavens and the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. (—XLV : 36-37)

(ii) God is most worthy of being loved and feared

Because of His limitless Beneficence and infinite Excellence it is the prerogative of God that He should be loved more than anyone else, and, in the same way, because of His Majestic Power and Supremacy it is appropriate that He should be feared most.

To those who have, out of ignorance or bigotry, set up for themselves other deities besides Allah and adore them equally with Him and render spiritual allegiance to them, the holy Quran addresses the admonition :

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَهْبَاءً يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ

Of mankind are some who take unto themselves (objects of worship which they set up as) rivals to Allah, loving them with a love like (that which is due) of Allah (only)—those who believe are stauncher in their love for Allah. (—II : 165)

قَالَ اللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَوْا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ۝

If ye are believers, Allah hath more right that ye should fear Him. (—IX : 13)

فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَخْشَوْنِي ۝

So fear not mankind, but fear Me. (—V : 44)

(iii) God alone is to be relied upon

هُوَ مَوْلَانَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ قَلِيلَتُوكُلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۝

Allah (alone) is our Protecting Friend. In Him let believers put their trust. (—IX : 51)

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاللهِ هُوَ مَوْلَاكُمْ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلَى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ ۝

Hold fast to Allah. He is your Protecting Friend. A blessed Patron and a blessed Helper. (—XXII : 78)

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا ۝

Lord of the East and the West ; there is no God save Him ; so choose thou Him alone for thy (helper and) defender. (—LXXIII : 9)

(iv) God is the real law-giver

أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْتَغِي حَكْمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا ۝

Shall I seek other than Allah for judge, when He it is Who has revealed unto you (this) Scripture, fully explained ? (—VI : 114)

The misguided and the uninformed who regard the fiats and ordinances issued or promulgated by others, aside of God,

to be the *Shariat* (Law) and hold themselves bound in duty to carry them out are reproached by the Quran in these words,

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ تَتَّبِعُونَ ۚ أَلَمْ يَأْذَنَ بِهِ اللَّهُ

Or have they partners (of Allah) who have made for them some other religion or some other law which Allah allowed not? (XLII : 21).

(D) THE FOREMOST REQUIREMENT OF THE QURAN IN RESPECT OF DIVINE UNITY

Among the various aspects of the doctrine of Divine Unity the one to which the sacred Quran attaches the utmost value is that God alone should be worshipped and all prayers and petitions addressed solely to Him. The reason is not far to seek. The communities which have strayed away from the straight path of Monotheism have, generally, erred in the spheres of worship and supplication, and the weak and wavering men, in all ages, have indulged mostly in this form of Polytheism. Imagining some other beings, aside of the One God, to be the dispensers of their needs and the suppliers of their wants they began to address their petitions to them and to propitiate them by prostrating themselves before their images or circumambulating around them and making their vows and oblations to them and offering charity in their name.

In sum, seeing that Polytheism in worship and supplication is the commonest form of religious transgression and people who are lacking in a clear understanding of Godhead are, often, guilty of it, the Quran has laid an outstanding stress on this aspect of Divine Oneness.

We will, first, refer to some of the verses concerning prayer and supplication in the hour of one's need.

لَهُ دَعْوَةُ الْحَقِّ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ

Unto Him is the real prayer (in the hour of need). Those unto whom they pray beside Allah respond to them not at all. (—XIII : 14).

وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُونَ نَصْرَكُمْ وَلَا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَنْصُرُونَ ۝

Those on whom ye call beside Allah cannot give you help, nor can they help themselves. (—VII : 197)

قُلْ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ فَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ كَشْفَ الضُّرِّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا تَحْوِيلًا ۝

Say (O Mohammad) : Call unto those (saints and angels) whom ye assume (to be gods) beside Him and (ye will see that) they have no power to rid you of misfortune nor to change. (—XVII : 56)

وَمَنْ يَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهُ بِهِ فَإِنَّمَا حِسَابُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ ۝

He who crieth unto any other god along with Allah hath no proof thereof. His reckoning is only with his Lord. Lo! disbelievers will not be successful. (—XXIII : 117)

فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنَ اللَّعَنِينَ ۝

Invoke not with Allah any other god, lest thou be one of the doomed. (—XXVI : 213)

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَدْعُوا رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِهِ أَحَدًا ۝

Say (unto them, O Mohammad) : I supplicate unto Allah only, and ascribe unto Him no partner. (LXXII : 20)

وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۝

Any cry not unto any other god along with Allah. There is no God save Him. Everything will perish save His Being. (—XXVIII : 88)

In the last of the above verses the holy Quran has offered an easy-to-understand argument and a simple suggestion to those

who care to think and decide for themselves. The Quran says that everything besides God is bound to perish; the eternal and everlasting existence is that of God alone who is the Creator and Preserver of whatever there is in the world. The misguided Polytheists who cry out to others for help along with, or apart from, Allah and beseech them for their needs also know in their hearts that He, alone, is the Eternal Being and all the rest is destined to meet its end one day or the other. How patently foolish is it, then, for anyone to regard those to be his helpers or protecting friends or dispensers of needs about whom he knows for sure that they are not free and independent in the sphere of their own existence and it does not even lie in their hands to save themselves from death and destruction?

Thus, all those who venerate the idols or holy spirits or the dead saints and the Prophets as gods and invoke their blessings and call on them for help and patronage (although they know that these all are or were mere mortals) should ask themselves what a grievous error they are caught in and how utterly shameful and debasing it is for them to hold such beliefs and follow such practices.

As for Polytheism in worship we will address ourselves to the following verses of the Quran:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ

And do not set up with Allah any other God. (—XVII : 23)

وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا

And serve Allah. Ascribe nothing as partner unto Him. (IV : 36)

If worship is offered to any other deities, apart from Allah, it is solely due to the misbelief that they, too, have a hand in the exercise of Divine Power. The Quran, therefore, misses no opportunity to remove this misunderstanding by drawing

attention to the fact that those whom you idolize in the place of, or along with, God are absolutely powerless and can do neither harm nor good to anyone.

فَلَا تَعْبُدُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا وَاللَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

Serve ye in place of Allah that which possesseth for you neither hurt nor gain? Allah is He who is the Hearer and the Knower, (You should, therefore, not be unmindful of His displeasure or chastisement). (—V : 76)

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ رِزْقًا مِنَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ

And they worship beside Allah that which owneth no provision whatsoever for them from the heavens or the earth, nor have they whom they worship) any power. (—XVI : 73)

The Quran, further, holds that the communities which went astray and took to Polytheistic ways had never been advised to follow such a course by the Divine Messengers that were sent down to them. These venerable men, on the other hand, had always preached among them nothing but pure Monotheism and exhorted them simply to serve no one except One God.

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَنَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

They were (through the earlier Prophets and revealed scriptures) bidden to worship only One God. There is no God save Him. Be He glorified from all that they ascribe as partner (unto Him). (—IX : 31)

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

And verily We have raised in every nation a Messenger, (proclaiming): Serve Allah and shun false gods. (—XVI : 36)

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رُسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوْحِي إِلَيْهِمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ ۝

And We sent up Messenger before thee but We inspired him (saying):
There is no God save Me (Allah). So worship no one but Me.
(—XXI : 25)

Apart from these general statements, the Quran tells candidly about the holy Apostles whose teachings it has mentioned in detail that the first thing they taught to their peoples was simply this that there was no God but One God, and He alone was worthy of obedience, and they should, therefore, worship no one save Him.

DO NOT WORSHIP ANYONE BESIDES GOD : THERE IS NO ONE WORTHY OF WORSHIP SAVE HIM

The Quran affirms emphatically that this was exactly what Nooh and Hud and Saleh and Shuaib and Ibrahim and all the other sacred Apostles raised up after them had taught.

But the Christians invented the doctrine of Trinity and placed Jesus and the holy Ghost (and, some of them, Jesus and his mother, Mary) on the pedestal of Divinity by making them partners in Godhead and laid the blame at the door of their Prophet (Peace be upon whom) saying that it was from him that they had learnt as such. The Quran refutes the charge over and over again and says that, like the other Apostles of God, Jesus, too, had preached nothing more and nothing less than the Oneness of God and told his people definitely that :

وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ يَبْنَىٰ إِسْرَءِيلَ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ
مَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَاهُ النَّارُ
وَاللَّظْلِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارِ ۝

O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Lo!
whoso ascribeth partners unto Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden

Paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evil-doers there will be no helpers. (—V : 72)

In the same way, in *Sura-i-Aal-i-Imran* it is stated that when Jesus made his appearance before his people as an Apostle of God and claimed that, by Allah's Will, he could heal the leper and cure the born blind and raise the dead and perform so many other miracles, he had made it perfectly clear that, like them, he, too, was not God but only His bondsman, and His Lord and Creator was the same as theirs, who alone was deserving of worships and obeisance, and he was, therefore, calling on them to keep their duty to Him and worship no one aside of Him for that was the only way to salvation. The words of Jesus, as reproduced in the Quran, read :

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ۝

It is beyond a shadow of doubt that Allah is my Lord and your Lord.
So worship Him. That is the straight path. (—III : 51)

In a nutshell, the Quran has laid the fullest emphasis on all the aspects of TAWHEED, leaving practically no scope for Polytheism to raise its head, and Polytheism in worship and supplication, has received its greatest attention for the reason that it has proved to be the most dangerous pitfall for individuals as well as communities in the religious scheme of things. Thus, at the very outset, after the first three phrases of adulation for the Almighty, in the fourth, which reads, *Thee alone do we worship and to Thee alone do we beg for help* the undertaking is taken from the reader that he will never worship or address his prayers and petitions to anyone except God.

At one place in the Quran, the gospel of TAWHEED in worship and supplication has been presented in such a way as if it was the real message of the Quran and of the Last of the holy Apostles through whom it was revealed to humanity, as well as the sum and substance of all religious preaching and instruction.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِن كُنْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْ دِينِي فَلَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِينَ
تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ أَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي يَتَوَقَّعُكُمْ وَ
أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ۖ وَإِنْ أَقَمَّ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ
حَنِيفًا وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۖ وَلَا تَدْعُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
لَا يَنْفَعَكَ وَلَا يَضُرُّكَ فَإِنْ فَعَلْتَ فَإِنَّكَ إِذًا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ۖ وَإِنْ
يَسْأَلُكَ اللَّهُ بِشَيْءٍ فَلَا تَحْشُرْ لَهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ الْبَاقِي ۖ وَإِنْ يُرِيدْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَلَا رَادَّ
لِفَضْلِهِ يُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝

Say (O Prophet): O mankind! If ye are in doubt about my religion then (know that) I worship not whom ye worship instead of Allah, but I worship Allah who causeth you to die, and I have been commanded to be of the believers.

And, (O Prophet), set thy purpose resolutely for religion, as man by nature upright, and be not of those who ascribe partners (unto Him).

And cry not, beside Allah, unto that which cannot profit thee nor hurt thee, for if thou didst so then thou would be among the wrong-doers.

If Allah afflicteth thee with some hurt, there is none who can remove it save Him: and if He desireth good for thee, there is none who can repel His bounty. He striketh with it whom He will of His bondmen. He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. (X: 104-107)

The holy Prophet, in the afore-mentioned verses, is inspired to proclaim that the fundamental article of the faith to which he invited mankind was that only Allah was to be worshipped and He, alone, was to be supplicated to for one's needs and no partners were to be ascribed to him in that regard.

(E) LAST WORD

The teaching and guidance on the subject of TAWHEED we have studied so far constitute, undoubtedly, the most distinguishing feature of the Quran and Islam. As far as we know, such a thorough and perfect elucidation of the concept of Divine Oneness is not to be found in any other scripture or book of religious guidance in the world. But the Quran has made out one more point in this connection which goes far ahead and can,

legitimately, be described as the last word on Monotheism. In *Sura-i-Anaam* it says:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۖ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ۚ
وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Say (O Mohammad): Lo! My worship and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the Worlds. He hath no partner. This I am commanded and I am first of those who surrender (unto Him). (—VI: 162-63)

In these verses the sacred Prophet is commanded to affirm unequivocally that his *Namaz* and whole of worship was solely for Allah and so was his living and dying. This is what he was ordained to do, viz., that his worship and oblations and his entire existence and, even death, should be altogether for God and his acts and whatever he might do ought to be for the sake of Him alone and in accordance with His Law. He was the first to submit to Him and to undertake to spend every moment of his life in the seeking of His pleasure and in loyalty and obedience to Him.

This, in fact, is the most sublime and elevated form of TAWHEED that a man submitted wholeheartedly to God, in life as well as in death, and dedicated his entire existence to the carrying out of His commands and earning of His good graces.

A special reason for adopting the method of requiring the holy Prophet to make this solemn affirmation for the sake of imparting the final lesson on TAWHEED, probably, was that when the Apostle of the Lord himself proclaimed that all his adoration and worship and living and dying were solely for Allah and he was, also, the first to make his submission to Him, and in devotion and loyalty, too, he was ahead of everyone else there would be left no possibility of his being raised to the status of Divinity or regarded as a colleague or partner of God.

The greatest danger to which the followers of the blessed Prophet were exposed was that swayed by his extraordinary personality and supernatural deeds, they might, also, begin to attribute Divinity to him as the Christians had done in the case

of Jesus Christ. Hence, to eliminate the possibility of it the humanity of the Prophet and the fact of his being a mere mortal is stressed tirelessly by the Quran, and, on various occasions, it has been found expedient to have the declaration of this truth made by the sacred Apostle himself.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاحِدٌ
فَاسْتَقِيمُوا إِلَيْهِ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ ۚ وَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ ۖ

Proclaim (O Mohammad): I am only a mortal like you. It is inspired to me that your God is One God, therefore take the straight path unto Him and seek forgiveness of Him. And woe unto the idolators. (-XLI: 6)

قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولًا ۖ

Say (O Mohammad): My Lord be Glorified. I am naught save a mortal Messenger. (-XVII: 93)

قُلْ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا رَشَدًا ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي لَنْ يُجِيرَنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ وَلَنْ أَجِدَ مِنْ
دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا ۚ

Say (O Mohammad): Lo! I control not hurt nor benefit for you. Say: Lo! None can protect me from Allah (should He decide to take me to task), nor can I find any refuge beside Him. (LXXII: 21-22)

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ
لَا سْتَكْبَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ ۚ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ ۚ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ ۚ

Say: For myself I have no power to benefit, nor power to hurt, save that which Allah willeth. Had I knowledge of the Unseen, I should have abundance of wealth, and adversity would not touch me. I am but a Warner, and a Bearer of Good Tidings unto folk who believe. (-VII: 188)

Another noteworthy precaution taken by the Quran for the protection of its followers against the ingress of Polytheism is that whenever the wonderful virtues and exceptional eminence of the holy Prophet have been spoken of in its verses, the term 'bondsman' has invariably been used for him, along with laudatory expressions, in order to emphasise his humanity and servitude to the Almighty. As a case in point we will refer to the description, contained in the Quran, of *M'eraj* (the Celestial Journey), which marked the climax of his glory and the like of which had not come the way of any other Divine Apostle or Angel. The Quran specifically speaks of the Prophet as *His bondsman* while narrating the story of his heavenly experience. It says:

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا الَّذِي بَرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنَ آيَاتِنَا ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ۚ

Glorified be He who carried His bondsman by night from the Invoilable Mosque (of Mecca) to the Mosque of Aqsa (in Jerusalem)..... (-XVII: 1)

Likewise, in *Sura-i-Najm*, in the context of the same ascension of the sacred Prophet through the seven heavens, it is mentioned that he was taken higher and higher till a bare *two bows' length* or even less separated him from his Lord, and, then, it is added immediately that *God revealed unto His bondsman that which He revealed*. (LIII: 10).

The same, again, applies to the basic confession of *Ashhad-o-An-Laa-Ilaah-a-Ilallaah-wa-Ashhad-o-Anna-Mohammadan-Abduhu-wa-Rasooluhu* which is universally recognised as the gateway to Islam and the arch-stone of faith. In it, while an affirmation is made of the Oneness of God it is also accepted that, together with the Apostleship of Mohammad (Peace be upon whom), the fact of his being the bondsman of God, too, has got to be attested to before one can be a Muslim.

Though the object here is only to present the teachings of the holy Quran it may not be out of place to include within the

scope of our enquiry some of the sayings of the blessed Prophet which have a direct bearing upon the issue at hand. The Prophet, on his part, also left no stone unturned in warning his followers against the folly and imprudence of associating the attributes of Divinity with him on account of excessive devotion or veneration. Some of his sayings, thus, read :

"Do not utter such exaggerated words of praise for me as the Christians do for Prophet Jesus, the son of Mary. I am nothing more than a servant of God and His Apostle. So call me only that¹."

"Do not magnify me beyond my true rank and position. God has made me His (slave before raising me up as His) Apostle, that is, I am a slave of the Lord first and His Apostle afterwards²."

Once the holy Prophet is reported to have severely admonished his Companions for treating him with undue respect. He said, "O People! Do not let the Devil mislead you. I am Mohammad, son of Abdullah, and a servant of God and His Apostle. I do not like that you should exalt me above what God has preferred for me."³

On another occasion, a Companion inadvertently said to him, "If God wills and you will". The Prophet, at once, checked him : "You have made me an equal and partner of God. Say, if God alone wills⁴."

The Prophet had before him the experience of some of the earlier peoples whose Prophets had striven throughout their lives in the path of TAWHEED and waged a ceaseless struggle against Polytheism, but they had, after the death of those very Apostles, made their graves into objects of worship and prostrated before them. The Prophet, therefore, warned his followers strictly

1. *Bukhari and Muslim*

2. *Kanz-ul-Ummal*

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

against it. He said to them : "Some communities before you have turned the graves of their Prophets into objects of worship. You must not do so. Beware, I have warned you."¹

In the same vein was the prayer he made during his last illness, just a little before his death : "O God! Do not let my grave be turned into an idol to which worship may be offered."²

All these exhortations and warnings of the holy Prophet were nothing but an elucidation of and a commentary on the teachings of the Quran on the subject of TAWHEED.

Unbounded blessings of the Lord be on the sacred Apostle who imparted to the world such a complete and lucid understanding of the creed of Divine Oneness and firmly blocked all the paths through which Polytheistic untruths could be brought in by the Devil!

(F) DENUNCIATION OF POLYTHEISM

Another method employed by the Quran for the preaching and propagation of the concept of Divine Unity is to warn mankind against the dreadful doom that awaits those who are guilty of it.

لَيْسَ لِلَّهِ لَإِ يَغْفِرَ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرَ مَا دُونِ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ

Verily! Allah pardoneth not that partners should be ascribed unto Him. He pardoneth all save that to whom He will. (IV : 116)

We have already seen the verse from *Sura-i-Maida* which reads :

Lo! Whosoever ascribeth partners unto Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden Paradise. His abode is in the Fire. For evil-doers there will be no helpers (against His wrath). (-V : 72)

In view of the fact that Polytheism is such an unpardonable

1. *Muslim*

2. *Muslim*

sin and it has been ordained for the Polytheists that they shall make their eternal home in the bottomless pit of Hell, the Prophet and all the believers have been forbidden from praying for their forgiveness. God does not want even to hear of it.

مَا كَانَ لِلشَّيْخِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلشَّارِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا أُولَىٰ قُرْبَىٰ

It is not for the Prophet, and those who believe, to pray for the forgiveness of idolators (including those who ascribe partners unto Allah) even though they may be near of kin to them. (—IX: 113)

إِنَّمَا الشُّرَكَاءُ نَجَسٌ

The idolators (and the Polytheists) are unclean. (—IX: 28)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَرِيءٌ مِّنَ الشُّرَكِيِّنَ ۚ وَرَسُولُهُ

Allah is free from obligation and is displeased and will have nothing to do with the idolators (and the Polytheists) and so is His Messenger. (—IX: 3)

Having discussed, at some length, the Quranic message of TAWHEED, it needs be pointed out that what has been said in these pages marks only a fraction of the teachings of the Quran on this fundamental reality. Those who are fortunate enough to be able to read and understand the Quran can appreciate the forcefulness, beauty and thoroughness of its call of Monotheism adequately only by undertaking a direct study of it.

CHAPTER IV

HEREAFTER

Among the transcendental truths the holy Quran calls on us to affirm as a matter of fundamental necessity, the one concerning the Hereafter occupies a place next in importance only to the existence of God and His Attributes and Oneness.

The Quran says that just as we believe that there is a God and regard His existence to be a positive and self-evident reality which no sensible person can question, although we have never seen Him with our eyes nor heard His voice with our ears, it is, also, beyond dispute that, at the end of this mortal life, there will follow another existence, which, unlike our present existence, will not be transitory, but a permanent and never-ending one and a thousand times more evolved and perfect, and in which we will have to render a full account of the good or evil acts we might have done during our earthly sojourn and receive the reward or punishment for them, as the case may be.

The question of the Hereafter being of basic importance to religion, like the questions of God's existence and His Attributes, all the Prophets of the Lord and the Scriptures revealed by Him have enjoined on men to affirm their unqualified faith in the life to come, and seeing that the Quran is the ultimate Word of God, it has unfolded and explained it in a most lucid manner and from all conceivable angles.

The Quran does not merely give the call for belief in the world to come, but, also, indicates why such an existence is a necessity and how wrong and sinful it is to deny it. It gives the warning of a dreadful penalty for rejecting the truth of the Hereafter and contends that the doubts entertained by the ignorant and the unbelieving in respect of it are not only

unreasonable, but, also, utterly foolish and baseless.

The Quran, further, describes, in some detail, the events that are destined to take place in the After-life, what beautiful rewards are awaiting the faithful servants of God and how gloriously blissful things are going to be for them on the other side of death, and, conversely, what a frightful retribution has been got ready in the future world for those that do wrong and reject the truth: in short, how exquisite are the joys and pleasures of Heaven and how fearful and terrifying is the chastisement of Hell.

(A) WHY IS THE HEREAFTER NECESSARY ?

The Quran argues that if life were to end on this planet and there was no continuity of existence across the threshold of death, the entire scheme of creation would turn out to be an exercise in futility. No justification would, then, be left for the setting up of the world, worthy of its All-wise, All-knowing Creator.

As a little reflection will show, the position of man in the world is the same as that of an occupant in a house. There are many more things in a house besides its inmates, such as, foodstuffs, utensils, furniture, lighting arrangements, sanitary installations, pets, children's toys, vehicles, and, so on. But none of these is an end in itself. If these things are there, it is only for serving the needs of those who live in it, one way or the other. The same is the case with the whole design of universe. Everything that is contained in it, the earth, the mountains, the rivers, the air, the sun, the moon, the birds, the trees, the animals, is wholly for the sake of man. Man is the central figure, the end of all creation, and the entire workshop of the earth and the skies has been brought into creation solely for him. It is, also, accepted on all hands that man's fleeting life in this world is nothing more than a dream and a fancy. What is more, there are but a few of us, not even one or two in a hundred, who may really be satisfied with our existence. Thus, in our humble opinion, had there been no After-life or

Futurity, as revealed by the Divine Apostles and portrayed so vividly in the Quran, it would be a thousand times better for man not to have been born at all. We would go a step further and say that if we had no faith in the Hereafter, we would have protested vehemently against our creation and preferred suicide, not only for ourselves but for the whole of mankind, to this transient stay on the earth, loaded as it is with innumerable woes and anxieties.

The early part of the brief span of life granted to man is taken up by childhood which is a period of dependence and constraint. Then there comes youth which heralds the joy of living, but it, also, brings with it, a host of cares and worries and such desires and ambitions the fulfilment of which is not possible to everyone. Soon afterwards, the decline sets in, and, slowly but surely, the old age strengthens its hold with its numerous aches and pains and other infirmities. In the end, man departs from the world. He dies. This, in short, is the sum-total of his earthly existence, provided, of course, that he is granted a normal lease of life. Now, can anyone with an iota of commonsense say that this short-lived terrestrial career of man is really a matter of such importance that the whole of creation should have been given rise to for the sake of it? That being the case, if at the end of this mortal life there was not to follow another life and another world (the Hereafter), as foretold by the Prophets and in the sacred Scriptures, the creation of the heavens and the earth, and even of man himself, would plainly seem to be a meaningless joke.

The Quran, in its inimitable style, sets forth the above argument in these words :

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ ۝

Did you think then that We had created you for nothing and that you would not be returned to Us? (—XXIII: 115)

Would it not be wholly preposterous for anyone to imagine about the Almighty, who is the Worshipped One, the real

Sovereign, and the Lord of the Throne of Grace that He had created man merely for the fun of it? There is, on the other hand, a definite plan and a specific purpose behind the creation of man, and it is that he should prepare himself, while in this world, for appearance before the Lord of lords, the King of kings, and for receiving His choicest favours and blessings in the life of the future which is going to be the last and the highest stage in the evolution of his destiny.

The brief earthly existence of man itself is, thus, the biggest reason why it should be followed by the immeasurably more advanced and never-ending life of the Hereafter.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الْعِبَثَ ۖ

And We created not the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, in play. (—XLIV:38)

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى ۚ

Thinketh man that he is to be left aimless? (—LXXV:36)

The creation of man acquires meaning and purpose only when the Final Requital is believed in and it is realised that this life is a prelude to and a preparation for the permanent and more refined existence of Futurity. The moment the concept of the After-life is rejected, the creation of man, which is such a glorious act of God, becomes a cruel joke

SECOND ARGUMENT

The Quran, along with it, sheds light upon the necessity of the Hereafter from another angle also. It says that people see in the world that there is both vice and virtue, but neither the vice is punished here nor is virtue rewarded as it should be and as the Divine Attribute of Justice would seem to demand. It is, therefore, essential that there should be another existence, after the present one, in which the wicked should be punished for their sins and the virtuous rewarded for their good deeds by God. Were it not so, it would amount to a shocking lapse and a lamentable injustice on the part of the Cherisher and the

Sustainer of the world.

Let us dilate upon it a little further. We observe around us that there are hardened criminals and incorrigible sinners who commit all sorts of wicked deeds, they kill people and rob them of their property oppress the weak and tyrannise over the poor, usurp the justful rights of others and practise deceit and indulge in bribery—and yet no calamity befalls them and they live in peace and comfort till the end of their time, and, when they die, they leave behind a lot of wealth and other assets for their families. On the other side, there are men who are pious and virtuous: they neither deceive nor swindle nor subject anyone to cruelty and injustice; they, also, worship God and serve His creatures, but with all this, their lives are filled with pain and misery. Sometimes there is illness, sometimes some other calamity; the poor souls depart from the world in the same condition and their piety and well-doing seems to avail them nothing. Now if there be no After-life in which the righteous and the evil-doers are requited for their conduct in the world, the blame would come upon God that there is more injustice in His scheme of things than even in the most corrupt and unworthy governments of the world where no distinction is made between right and wrong, and the virtuous and the wrongdoers are treated alike. No right-thinking person can accept this position. What to speak of God, such a conduct would not be worthy of an ordinary gentleman that he drew no line between the saint and the sinner and dealt with both of them in an identical manner. Says the Quran:

أَفَتَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ ۚ مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ۚ

Shall We treat those that are faithful as We treat those that are guilty? (It shall never be so). (LXVIII:35-36)

أَمْ تَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ
أَمْ تَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ ۚ

Shall We treat those who believe and do good works as those who spread corruption on the earth; Or shall We treat the pious as the wicked? (XXXVIII:28)

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا الشَّيْءَ أَنْ نَجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءً مِمَّا آتَاهُمُ
سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ

Or do those who commit ill-deeds suppose that We shall make them as those who believe and do good works, the same in life and in death? Bad is their judgement. (—XLV:21)

To put it differently, all material things in the world are endowed with some properties or capacity to produce a certain reaction. It is, thus, in the nature of fire to give out heat and to burn, and of water that it cools and can extinguish the fire. Every herb and plant growing out of the earth has some distinctive quality and even the insects are not without it. In the same way, all the physical acts of man carry with them, as a matter of course, some reciprocal effects or consequences. For example, when he eats, it fills his stomach and appeases his appetite; when he drinks water, it refreshes him and quenches his thirst; when he runs, it tires him and makes him perspire; and when he partakes of a disagreeable thing, it gives him discomfort and upsets his digestion. It, therefore, follows automatically that his moral and spiritual acts, also, which are manifestly of a much higher significance, should not be unaccompanied by any effects or results. A man gives away his food to the needy and goes without it himself or willingly takes the trouble of fetching water from a distant place for those that are thirsty or takes care of the sick and the indigent and yet he derives no benefit in this world from his highmindedness and sincerity. When we see all this, our reason naturally demands that these noble deeds should not go unrewarded and must bear fruit at one time or the other.

Conversely, a man is a thief or a pickpocket; he tyrannises over others and usurps their rights, accepts bribe and torments his powerless neighbours or commits other foul and despicable deeds and yet goes scot-free in life. About him, do we not feel that retribution should overtake him sooner or later and he must be made to reap the consequences of his viciousness?

Commonsense can never accept that such important and far-reaching good or evil deeds of man, who is the most excellent of created beings (and for whom, in fact, the heavens and earth have been created) should yield no results in the shape of reward or punishment. Such a thing would be outrageously in conflict with the Divine purpose of creation.

وَخَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَلِيُجْزِيَ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

Allah hath created the heavens and the earth with truth, and that every soul may be repaid what it hath earned. And they will not be wronged. (—XLV:22)

(B) SOME FOOLISH DOUBTS AND SATANIC MISGIVINGS ABOUT THE HEREAFTER

The holy Quran goes further to remove the doubts and misgivings which, generally, arise in the minds of the unknowing people about the life to come or which the agents of mischief and darkness strive to spread among men in order to lead them astray from the path of faith and piety. Now and again, it takes note of these doubts and furnishes such effective answers and uses such convincing arguments and analogies that it becomes impossible for a sensible person to be misled by them.

A most common objection is based on the ground that the dead cannot be raised up again. The deniers of the revelation of the Quran took up the same position and even, today, the main argument of the skeptics is that since it had never happened that the dead might have been brought back to life, how could it come to pass on the Last Day. Of the unbelievers of its own time the Quran says:

بَلْ قَالُوا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْأَوَّلُونَ ۚ قَالُوا إِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا ۖ إِنَّنَا لَسَعُودُونَ ۚ

They say the like of that which said the men of old; they say: When we are dead and have become (mere) dust and bones, shall we, then, forsooth, be raised again? (—XXIII:81-82)

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَآبَاءُنَا أَيْتًا لَمُخْرَجُونَ ۝

Those who disbelieve say: When we have become dust like our fathers, shall we verily be raised up again? (—XXVII: 67)

إِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا ذَلِكَ رَجْعٌ بَعِيدٌ ۝

When we are dead and have become dust (shall we be brought back to life)? That return (to life) is too far-fetched. (—L: 3)

In truth, the deniers of Resurrection and After-life have no valid reason to reject it on the ground that it is an impossibility which can never materialise. All that they can say is that the rising again of the dead—after “the dust hath returned to dust”—is a most extraordinary circumstance, the like of which they have never experienced in the world. But to anyone who is blessed with some understanding of God and of His excellent Attributes and unbounded Authority and has bestowed a little thought on the nature of the world and its functioning, it should present no difficulty.

To set the doubts of the skeptics of this category at rest the Quran has adopted the simple method of telling them that they regard the Resurrection a most strange proposition, and, that is why, they are not prepared to accept it. It is, of course, one of those things that do not lie within the ordinary operation of the law of cause and effect but before the infinite Power and Majesty of the Lord there is nothing exceptional in it.

The Quran draws attention to the special signs and portents of Resurrection and Futurity that are found in the material world and asks them to reflect, for instance, on their own birth and on the way God changes the dry and barren lands into lush-green fields by sending down the merciful rain. Is it, then reasonable, it asks, to suppose about the Almighty who can do these wonderful things at will that He cannot bring back the dead to life?

أَوَلَيْسَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقَدِيرٍ عَلَى أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ بَلَىٰ ۚ وَهُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ ۝

Is not He who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them? Aye, that He is. He is the All-wise Creator. His Command when He intends to do a thing, is only that He says unto it: Be! and it is. (—XXXVI: 81)

When only God's will and intention is enough to bring a thing into existence, why should it be difficult for Him to revive His creatures after death?

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَهُوَ أَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَىٰ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝

He it is who produces creation, then reproduces it, and it is easier for Him (to do that, viz., to recreate what He has once created). He is the Sublime Similitude in the heavens and the earth. He is the Mighty, the Wise. (—XXX; 27)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِن كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَغَيْرِ مُخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَنُقَرُّ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشَدَّكُمْ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يَتَّقَىٰ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يَكْفُرْ يَئِزُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْدَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مَن بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا وَلَكِنَّ الْأَرْضَ هَامِدَةٌ وَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ وَأَنْثَبَتْ مِّن كُلِّ ذُو نَبْهٍ ۝ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّهُ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَأَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝ وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْعَثُ مَن فِي الْقُبُورِ ۝

O mankind! If ye are in doubt concerning the Resurrection then lo! We have created you from dust, then from a drop of seed, then from a clot, then from a lump of flesh shapely and shapeless, so that We may make it (Our Power) clear for you. And We cause what We will to remain in the wombs for an appointed time, and afterwards We bring you forth as infants, then give you growth that ye attain your full strength. And among you there is he who dieth (young), and among you there is he who is brought to the most abject time of life (the old age, which is also known as second childhood), so that, after knowledge,

he knoweth naught (because of senile decay). And thou (Mohammad) seest the earth barren, but when We send down rain thereon, it doth thrill and swell and put forth every lovely kind of growth. This all is because Allah, He is the Truth, (and from these everyday observations you can for yourself realise that) Allah quickeneth the dead, and lo! He has power over all things (and also that) there is no doubt thereof that the Hour will come and, verily, Allah will raise those who are in the graves. (-XXII: 5-7)

In the afore-mentioned verses, the Quran contends that if a person, who has his doubts on the question of the Hereafter but wants to understand it, only ponders on the changes that take place at the behest of God in his own life, from birth to death, and over which he has no control, and on the alterations in the state of the earth, under his feet, with one season yielding place to the other, all his misgivings would be dispelled and the Resurrection and the Hereafter would no more appear to him to be unfeasible.

يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَيُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَكَذَلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

He bringeth forth the living, from the dead, and He bringeth forth the dead from the living, and He reviveth the earth after her death. And even so will ye be brought forth (on the Day of judgement, after your death). (-XXX: 19)

فَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ أَشْرَاحِ مَا كَفَّ يَدَاكَ عَنْ الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمُحْيٍ الْمَوْتِ ۖ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

Look at the portents of Allah's mercy (in creation): how He quickeneth the earth after her death. Lo! He verily is the Quickener of the Dead, and He is Able to do all things. (-XXX: 50)

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ خَاشِعَةً فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِي أَحْيَاهَا لَمُحْيٍ الْمَوْتِ إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٥١﴾

And of His portents is this: that thou seest the earth lowly but when We send down the rain thereon it thrilleth and groweth. Lo! He who revives is surely the Reviver of Dead. Verily, He has power over all things. (-XLI: 39)

وَالَّذِي نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً بِقَدَرٍ فَأَنْشَرْنَا بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَيِّتَةً كَذَلِكَ تُخْرَجُونَ ﴿١١﴾

And Who sendeth down the rain from sky in (a fixed) measure, and reviveth a dead land therewith. In the same way will ye be revived (after death). (-XLIII: 11)

In hundreds of verses like these the Quran expounds the concept of Resurrection in such a plain language and dispels the childish doubts and imaginary misgivings of the unthinking people so convincingly that it becomes impossible to dispute or challenge it. The whole issue has been rendered so clear that instead of expressing surprise at the reality of the Hereafter, one should, in fact, be surprised at the perversity and cussedness of those who deny it.

وَأِنْ تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ إِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا أَمَا الْفَنَىٰ خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ﴿٥١﴾

If thou wonderest, then wondrous is their saying: When we die and are returned to dust, are we then forsooth to be raised in a new life? (-XIII: 5)

(C) SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME AFTER DEATH

By its very nature, the Quran is a Book of guidance, good counsel and admonition and not a treatise on philosophy or scholastic theology. On the question of the Hereafter, too, it concerns itself more with the facts the description of which is likely to promote the fear of God and a sincere solicitude for the life to come in the hearts of conscientious and reasonable men than with entering into a dialectical discussion on the possibility or actuality of it.

VARIOUS STAGES

Death, in fact, is another name for departure from this world for the next. The journey of the Hereafter begins with the passing away of man, but the relationship between the period intervening between death and the Day of Final Reckoning, which is known as *Barzakh* is the same as between the period

spent in the mother's womb and the life in this world. In other words, although the real life of the Hereafter will begin with Resurrection and the Divine reward and punishment will be unfolded, in full, only on the Last Day, the stage interjecting between death and Resurrection is a prelude to it through which a man must pass just as he has to spend some time in his mother's womb before coming into the present world. The Quran has, for this reason, dealt with the period of *Barzakh* only briefly and in passing, but on the questions of the Last Day, Resurrection, Final Reckoning and the apportionment of reward and punishment in the shape of Heaven and Hell it goes into such detail and dwells upon them so thoroughly that it is quite sufficient to arouse in our hearts a living fear of God and an earnest desire to prepare ourselves for the ultimate trial of the Hereafter. The position of the Quran, in this respect, is emphatically unique.

We will now examine some of the verses dealing with the different stages of the Hereafter.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ۚ لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ
هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ۚ وَإِذَا نْفَخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ
يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ۚ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ۚ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ
مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ۚ تَلْفَحُ وُجُوهُهُمْ أَلْتَارُ
وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالِحُونَ ۚ

Until, when death comes unto one of them, he saith: My Lord! Send me back so that I may make amends and do right in that which I have left behind! But may! It is but a word that he speaketh; (No one is returned to the world after death). Behind them is a barrier until the day when they will be raised up again. (They are in a sort of confinement till the Last Day). And (then) when the Trumpet is blown there will be no kinship among them that day, nor will they enquire for each-other. (On that day everyone will be requited according to his deeds). Those whose scales are heavy (with good deeds) will be successful, and those whose scales are light are those who lose their souls and will make their abode in

the Hell where fire will burn their faces and they will be glum therein. (—XXIII: 99-104)

وَجَاءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مَا كُنْتُمْ مِنْهُ تَحِيدُونَ ۚ وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ
يَوْمُ الْوَعْدِ ۚ وَجَاءَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّعَهَا سَائِقٌ وَشَهِيدٌ ۚ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ
مِّنْ هَٰذَا أَفْكَشْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ ۚ

And, (beware!), the agony of death cometh in truth. (And it is said unto him): This is what you shunned and tried to run away from. And the Trumpet is blown. This is the Day you were promised. (The Last Day will come at the appointed time). And every soul cometh in such a way that with it is a driver and a witness. (And unto the evil-doer it is said): Thou wast heedless of this Day of Final Judgement and Requital. Now We have removed from thy eyes the covering, and thy sight is most clear and piercing this day. (You can now see the Truths you denied in life). (—L: 19-22)

وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَتَقَرَّبُ رُفُفٌ مِّنَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَن شَاءَ اللَّهُ
وَكُلُّ أَتَوَدٌ ذَخِيرٌ ۚ وَتَرَىٰ الْجِبَالَ تَحْسِبُهَا جَمَادَةً وَهِيَ تَكْمَلُ الْخِبَابُ ۚ

And (remind them of) the Day when the Trumpet will be blown and the world will be destroyed), and all who are in the heavens and the earth will start in fear, save him whom Allah willeth. And all will come unto Him, humbled. And thou seest the mountains (from whose apparent state you imagine that they are solid and permanent and immovable, but when the Trumpet will be blown) they will be seen flying in the air like the clouds. (—XXVII: 87-88)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ ۖ إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ ۚ
يَوْمَ تَرَوُنَّهَا تُذْهِلُ كُلَّ مَرْضِعَةٍ عَنْ مَّارِضَتِهَا وَكُلُّ
ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَامِلٌ ۚ وَتَرَىٰ النَّاسَ سُكَرَىٰ وَمَهُمُ بِسُكْرَىٰ
لَكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ ۚ

O Mankind! Fear your Lord, for the Hour (of Judgement) will be a thing terrible! The Day you shall see it: every mother giving suck shall forget her suckling-babe, and every pregnant female shall drop her load unformed; Thou shalt see mankind as in a drunken-riot, yet not drunk! But dreadful shall be the wrath of God. (—XXII: 1-2)

That Day shall be set a seal on their mouths. But their hands will speak to Us,—and their feet will bear witness to all that they did. (—XXXVI: 65)

When Earth is shaken with her final convulsion, and it yieldeth up her burdens, and man sayeth: What aileth her? That day she will relate her chronicles, because thy Lord inspireth her. That day mankind will issue forth with scattered groups to be shown their deeds. And whoso doeth good even of the weight of an atom will see it then. (—XCIX)

CHAPTER V

HEAVEN AND HELL

All the Messengers and Prophets raised up by God and the Scriptures revealed by Him have uniformly stressed that the real life is the life of the Hereafter and the permanent abode of man is either Heaven or Hell. In a word, Heaven marks the supreme manifestation of the Divine Attributes of Compassion and Benevolence, and there, alone, will the tender qualities find their highest expression, and Hell, of the Divine Attributes of Severity and Anger, and these sterner qualities of God will find their fullest expression only in it.

What the holy Apostles and sacred Scriptures have taught about the shape of things to come after death is literally correct and will take place exactly as they have revealed. It would be as absurd to imagine that the concepts of Heaven and Hell, Divine reward and chastisement have been expounded by the hallowed Apostles and in the sacred Scriptures in the same spirit in which people invent stories to inspire fear in the hearts of children and produce in them the desire to be good as to contend that what these august men or heavenly revelations have preached about the fundamental truths like the Existence of God or the Last Day is intended merely for making the world a better place to live in, otherwise there is no reality in them.

Since the Quran is the last Word of God, the subject of Heaven and Hell, too, has been dealt with in it with such clarity and emphasis that unless our hearts are totally dead, it should be enough to arouse in us a genuine desire to do all that lies in our power to save ourselves from the grievous penalty of Hell and attain the cherished goal of Paradise by leading a life of virtue and God-fearingness, and avoiding what is wicked and sinful.

Reproduced below are a few verses of the Quran relevant to our present discussion. We will first take up verses dealing with Hell and the unceasing torment of which it is the home.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ٥

O ye who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a fire the fuel of which is men and stones, over which are set angels strong and severe, who resist not Allah in that which He commandeth them, but do that (only) which they are commanded. [It is, therefore, impossible that they showed leniency to anyone who was condemned to it]. (LXVI: 6)

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمَرْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفَرْ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا كَاسًا يَرَوْنَ سُورَاتِهَا وَلَنْ يُسْقَوْا فِيهَا سَاءَ مَا يُرْتَقَقُ ٥

Say (O Prophet): It is the truth from the Lord of you all. Then whosoever will, let him believe, and whosoever will, let him disbelieve. Surely, We have prepared for the disbelievers Fire. Its [smoke and flames] will hem them in like the walls and roof of a tent. When tormented by thirst they will beg for water, and they will be showered with water like molten lead which will burn their faces. How calamitous will this drink be and what a bad testing place is the Hell! (-XVIII: 29)

وَسُقُوا مَاءً حَمِيمًا فَقَطَّعَ أَمْعَاءَهُمْ ٥

They will be given boiling water to drink which will scald and tear up their bowels. (-XLVII: 15)

الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِالْكِتَابِ وَبِمَا أَرْسَلْنَا بِهِ رُسُلَنَا فَتُوعَى يَوْمَهُمُ الْإِنشَاءُ ٥
رَفِئَ أَعْنَاقِهِمْ وَالشَّلِيلُ يُسَبَّحُونَ ٥ فِي الْحَمِيمِ ثُمَّ فِي النَّارِ يُسْجَرُونَ ٥

Those who deny the Scripture and that wherewith We send the Messengers. But, they will come to know when carcasses are about their necks and chains [by which] they will be dragged through boiling waters and then thrown into the Fire. (-XL: 70-72)

فَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا قُطِعَتْ لَهُمْ ثِيَابٌ مِنْ نَارٍ يُصَبُّ مِنْ فَوْقِ رُءُوسِهِمُ الْحَمِيمُ ٥ يُصْهَرُ بِهِ مَا فِي بُطُونِهِمْ وَالْجُلُودُ ٥ وَلَهُمْ مَقَامٌ مِنْ حَدِيدٍ ٥ كُلَّمَا أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ غَمٍّ أُعِيدُوا فِيهَا وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ ٥

But those who deny (their Lord).—for them will be cut out a garment to Fire; over their heads will be poured out boiling water. With it will be scalded what is within their bodies, as well as their skins). In addition, there will be maces of iron (to punish) them. Every time they wish to get away therefrom, from anguish, they will be forced back therein, and (it will be said to them): Taste ye the Penalty of Burning. (-XXII: 19-22)

About the taste and nature of the fruit of the infernal tree, *Zagqum*, whereof the condemned shall eat, it is said in *Sura-i-Dukhan* that:

إِنَّ شَجَرَةَ الزُّقُومِ ٥ طَعَامُ الْآثِمِينَ ٥ كَالْمُهْلِ يَغْلِي فِي الْبُطُونِ ٥ كَغَلِي الْحَمِيمِ ٥ خُذُوهُ فَاعْتِلُوهُ إِلَى سَوَاءِ الْحَمِيمِ ٥ ثُمَّ صُوتُوا فَوْقَ رَأْسِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْحَمِيمِ ٥

Verily, the fruit of the tree of *Zagqum* will be the food of the sinful, it will be like molten brass which will boil in their insides, like the boiling of scalding water. (A voice will cry): Seize ye him and drag him into the midst of Blazing Fire! Then pour over his head the Penalty of Boiling Water. (-XLIV: 43-48)

Similarly, in *Sura-i-Ibrahim*, we read:

وَيُسْقَى مِنْ تَأْوِيلِهِ ٥ يُجْرَعُهُ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُسِغُهُ ٥ وَيَأْتِيهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ ٥ مَأْهُوٌّ بِمَيْتَةٍ ٥ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ عَذَابٌ غَلِيظٌ ٥

And he is given for drink boiling fetid water. In gulps will he sip it, but never swallowing it down his throat: death will come to him from every quarter, yet will he not die; and in front of him will be a chastisement unrelenting. (-XIV: 16-17)

And, in *Sura-i-Fatir* :

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَهُمْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ لَا يُقْضَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ فِيمَوتُوا وَلَا يَخَفَتْ عَنْهُمْ مِيزَةُ اللَّهِ
كَذَلِكَ نُجْزِي كُلَّ الْأُمَمِ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ۚ وَهُمْ يَصْطَرِخُونَ فِيهَا رَبِّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا غَيْرَ
الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ ۖ أَوْ كُنَّا نُعَذِّبُكُمْ قَالَتُكُمْ فِيهِ مَنْ تَذَكَّرُوا وَجَاءَ كَرُّ الْتَذَكُّيرِ فَذُوقُوا
عَذَابَ الظَّالِمِينَ ۖ

But as for those who disbelieve, for them is fire of Hell. Neither will it take such complete effect on them that they can die nor will its torment be lightened for them. Thus do We punish every ingrate. And they will cry for help (there), saying: Our Lord! Release us; we will do right, not (the wrong) we used to do. (The reply they will get will be): Did We not grant you a life long enough for him who reflected to reflect therein? And the Warner came unto you. Now taste (the flavour of your deeds), for evil-doers have no helpers. (—XXXV: 36-37)

And, in *Sura-i-Zukhruf* :

إِنَّ الْعَجْرَيْنِ فِي عَذَابٍ مُّتَسَاوِينَ ۖ لَا يُفْتَرُ عَنْهُمْ وَهُمْ فِيهِ
مُتَسَلِّمُونَ ۖ وَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا هُمُ الظَّالِمِينَ ۚ

Be sure, the guilty are immortal in hell's torment. It is not relaxed for them, and they despair therein. We wronged them not, but it was they who wronged themselves (and it all is the fruit of their own wrong-doing and transgression). (—XLIII: 74-76)

Next, read some verses relating to Paradise and its superlative joys and luxuries.

لِلَّذِينَ أَتَقَوَّا عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا يُنْفَخُونَ عَنْهَا زُكُودٌ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
وَأَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ وَاسِعٌ ۚ

For righteous are Gardens in nearness to their Lord, with rivers flowing beneath; therein is their eternal home; with Companions pure and holy, and the good pleasure of God. For in God's sight are [all] His servants. (The state of none of them is hidden from Him. (—III: 15)

مِثْلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِنْ تَاءٍ غَيْرِ لَيْسٍ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ لَبَنٍ لَمْ يَتَغَيَّرَ طَعْمُهُ
وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ خَمْرٍ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ عَسَلٍ مُصَفًّى وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ
وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ

[Here is] a Parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised in it are rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine of joy to those who drink; and rivers of honey (pure and clear). In it there are for them all kinds of fruit; and Grace from their Lord (—XLVII: 15)

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ۖ أَدْخُلُوها بِسَلَامٍ آمِينَ ۖ وَتَرَعْنَا مَا يَصْدُورُهُمْ مِنْ غِلٍّ إِخْوَانًا عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ ۖ لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ ۚ
وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُتَحَرِّجِينَ

Verily, those who ward off evil are among gardens and watersprings. And it is said unto them: Enter them in peace secure. And We remove whatever rancour may be in their breasts (owing to differences in worldly existence). As brethren, face to face, they rest in couches raised. No kind of distress reacheth them unto there, nor will they ever be ejected from Paradise. (—XV: 45-48)

إِنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ الْيَوْمَ فِي شُغْلٍ مُتَبَعٍ ۖ هُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُمْ فِي ظِلٍّ عَلَى الْأَرَاكِ
مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ ۖ لَهُمْ فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَلَهُمْ مَا يَدْعُونَ ۖ سَلَامٌ قَوْلًا مِنْ رَبِّ رَحِيمٍ ۖ

Verily, the Companions of Garden shall that Day have joy in all that they do; they and their associates will be in groves of cool shade; reclining on Thrones (of dignity); every fruit (enjoyment) will be there for them; they shall have whatever they call for; 'Peace!' a word of Salutation from their Lord, Most Merciful. (XXXVI: 55-58)

يُعْبَادُونَ إِلَّا الْإِلَهَ الْأَحَدَ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْأَحْمَدِ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْحَقِّ
وَأَخْلَوْا الْجَنَّةَ أَنْتُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ تُحْبَرُونَ ۖ يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِصِحَافٍ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ
وَفِيهَا مَنَازِلُ ۖ وَالنَّفْسُ وَتِلْكَ الْأَعْيُنُ وَأَنْتُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ۖ

O My Slaves! For you there is no fear this Day, nor shall ye grieve—ye who believed Our revelations and were self-surrendered. Enter the Garden ye and your wives to be made glad. Therein

are brought round for them trays of gold and goblets, and therein is all which the souls could desire and the eyes could delight in. And ye shall abide therein forever (—XLIII : 68-71)

On seeing the magnificent rewards of their Lord, the dwellers of the Paradise will exclaim in thankfulness and gratitude :

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنْنا الْحَزْنَ إِنَّ رَبَّنا لَغَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ۝ الَّذِي أَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمُقَامَةِ مِن فَضْلِهِ لَا يَمَسُّنا فِيها نَصَبٌ وَلَا يَمَسُّنا فِيها غُوبٌ ۝

Praise be to Allah who hath put grief away from us. Verily, our Lord is Forgiving, Bountiful, Who, out of His Grace, hath placed us in this Garden of Eternity, where toil toucheth us not, nor can weariness affect us. (—XXXV : 34-35)

From what has been stressed in the Quran about Hell it is apparent that all the pain and suffering it is in the nature of man to avoid has been piled up in it in an infinitely more magnified form than what he ever experiences in life, the object being to impress upon our minds the simple truth that when we do not want to have to bear these woes and distresses even for a day in this transitory existence, should we not do our utmost to shun the path of defiance of God and violation of His commands which leads directly to Hell in which the tortures and agonies shall never come to an end.

Likewise, the sum and substance of the verses relating to Paradise is that all the joys and pleasures the love of which is embedded in human nature have been assembled in it in a superlative degree. Hence, our constant endeavour should be to lead a life of loyalty to God and good-doing which, alone, can take us to Heaven where the fullest provision has been made for the satisfaction of all our natural desires and urges and those who will be blessed enough to find a place in it shall enjoy its celestial delights uninterruptedly and forever.

O God ! I beg of Thee Thy good pleasure and Paradise. I, also, beg of Thee to spare me, out of Thy mercy, the Chastisement of Fire.

CHAPTER VI

PROPHECY AND APOSTLESHIP

The primary requirement of the way of life to which the Quran invites is to believe in the existence of God and in His Oneness, and Uniqueness and other Attributes "as they are in truth".

The second is the affirmation of faith in the Hereafter and Final Requital which is the necessary complement and logical sequence of the Divine Attributes of Sovereignty, Wisdom and Justice, and without which this material world will entirely lose its meaning and become a veritable farce.

The third article of faith the Quran insists upon and declares to be the quintessence of its guidance is the acceptance of the whole Order of Prophecy and Apostleship. The Quran holds that it should be professed, as a matter of principle, that just as God has created the earth on which the crops are grown and the sun which gives out heat, and the air, water and all other things upon which we depend for our existence, He has, also, given rise to the Order of Prophethood so that we may obtain the true knowledge of His Being and Immaculate Attributes and of the programme of life He has ordained for us and by following which we can attain salvation and earn His good grace. God has sent down His Prophets and Messengers at all times and in every part of the world according to its peculiar needs and circumstances. All these august men were His beloved and trusted servants and the guidance they gave and the teachings they imparted to the world were essentially from Him.

In short, the Quran enjoins on us emphatically to believe in all the Apostles of God without distinction (no matter in which country and at what time were they raised up), to affirm faith in their piety and truthfulness, and to hold them worthy of

obedience as Divine Prophets in their respective ages and climes.

Next, the Quran asserts that the period of the Ministry of the earlier Apostles has come to an end and now, in the current era, the Prophet or Messenger of God for the whole world is Mohammad of Arabia (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon whom).

It declares that the guidance with which God has sent down the sacred Prophet supersedes the guidance brought by the former Prophets not because the guidance brought by them was temporary or provisional but because the teaching vouchsafed to the Prophet Mohammad and the holy Book revealed through him include the teachings of all the earlier Prophets. Hence, to follow the holy Prophet is to follow all the Apostles of God and to reject him is to reject them all. It, again, contends that the guidance furnished by the sacred Prophet is so comprehensive and perfect that it will hold good till the end of time and God, too, has made it safe against change and pollution. Thus it is that the Order of Apostleship, which was in existence from the beginning of the world, has been terminated with the raising up of the Prophet Mohammad and the sacred Prophet is not only the Ideal Prophet, but, also, the Last of the Prophets.

This, in a nutshell, is what Prophecy and Apostleship means from the Quranic point of view. Says the Quran :

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا

For We assuredly sent among every people an Apostle. (-XVI: 5)

In *Sura-i-Nissa*, after mentioning the names of some of the better known Apostles of the former times, it is stated that :

وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ

And We sent Messengers We have mentioned unto thee before and Messengers We have not mentioned unto thee. (-IV: 164)

And, after a few verses, it is laid down in the same section

that :

فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ

Therefore believe in Allah and in All the Apostles. (-IV: 171)

Those who do not wholeheartedly believe in God and in all the Prophets raised up by Him, but make a distinction among them, that is, those who claim to be believers and yet reject His Apostles, or accept some of them and deny the Apostleship of the others, of them the Quran says that this partial or conditional faith or affirmation of theirs is wholly untrustworthy and unless they believe in all the Divine Prophets they will be regarded not as believers but infidels.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ
نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الْكَاذِبُونَ حَقًّا ۖ وَاعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا ۚ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَمْ
يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ أَمْرِ مِّنْهُمْ أَوْ لَيْكٍ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيهِمْ أَجْرَهُمُ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا

Those who do not believe in Allah and in (all of) His Messengers and seek to make distinction between Allah and His Messengers by saying that they believe in some and disbelieve in others, and (by their conduct) try to carve out a middle course (between belief and unbelief by neither accepting nor rejecting all of them), such are disbelievers in truth; and for disbelievers We have prepared a shameful doom. But those who believe in Allah and in (all of) His Messengers and make no distinction between any of them, unto them Allah will give their wages in full; and Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful. (IV: 150-52)

The Quran asserts that all the Prophets sent down by God, at whatever time and in whichever country or community, were worthy of obedience and it was incumbent upon the people among whom they were raised up to follow their guidance and carry out their commands.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ

We sent no Messenger save that he should be obeyed by Allah's Command. (-IV: 64)

The Quran, also, indicates that the obedience to the Prophets is, in fact, obedience to God since what the Prophets enjoin or forbid is not of their own choice or making but solely from God. The Prophets act only as the revealers and interpreters of the Divine Law, (they are not its authors or formulators), and convey to the world merely what is revealed to them.

مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ

Whose obeyeth the Messenger obeyeth Allah. (-IV: 80)

And since obedience to the Prophet is obedience to God, those who turn away from him, in truth, turn away from God, and for them there is the warning of a painful doom.

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

Whoso opposeth Allah and His Messenger, (he should know that Allah is severe in punishment. (-VIII: 13)

وَكَأَيِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ عَتَتْ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهِ فَجَاءَتْهَا جُنُودٌ شَدِيدَةٌ وَعَادَ بِهَا عَذَابًا تَكَرَّرًا ۖ فَذَاقَتْ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَاقِبَةُ أَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا ۖ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ۖ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَا أُولِيَ الْأَلْبَابِ

And how many a community revolted against the commands of its Lord and His Messengers and We called it to a stern account and punished it with dire punishment. It thus tasted the ill-effects of its conduct, and the consequence of its conduct was nothing but loss. (This has happened to them in the world; and, in the Hereafter), Allah has prepared for them a stern Punishment. So, O men of understanding! O ye who believe! Keep your duty to Allah. (LXV: 8-10)

So much for the doctrinal requirement of the Quran about the affirmation of faith in the entire Order of Apostleship and

the acceptance of all the Prophets as the true Messengers of God. With regard to the Apostleship of Prophet Mohammad for the present era and the special significance of his Ministry, we read the following in *Sura-i-Fath*:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا ۖ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

He (Allah) it is Who hath sent Messenger with the guidance, and the religion of truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religion. And Allah sufficeth as a Witness (to this truth). (Anyhow) Mohammad is (now) the Messenger of Allah. (-XLIX: 28-29)

In *Sura-i-Maida*, after making a reference to the Apostleship of the Prophets Moses and Jesus, and the revelation of the Divine Scriptures of the Torah and the Bible, the distinction and uniqueness of the book revealed to the holy Prophet of Islam (i. e., the Quran) has been set forth in these words:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّمًا عَلَيْهِ

And unto thee (Mohammad) We have revealed the Scripture with the truth, confirming whatever Scripture was before it, and a watcher over it. (That is, the essence of and the essential guidance contained in all the earlier Scriptures has been included in it and made safe forever. Thus, the Quran is also the authentic version of the fundamental message and teachings of the earlier Prophets). (-V: 48)

In *Sura-i-A'araf*, the holy Prophet himself is bidden to proclaim it all mankind that .

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۖ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۚ الَّذِي الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ أَتُتَبَّعُونَ ۚ

Say (O Mohammad): O mankind, I am the Messenger of Allah to you all—(the Messenger of) Him unto Whom belongeth the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. There is no God save Him. He grants life, and He giveth death. So, believe in Allah

and His Messenger, the 'Unlettered Prophet, who, himself, believeth in Allah and in His Words (that is, in all the Scriptures revealed by Him), and follow him so that haply ye may be led aright (for now correct guidance can only be obtained by following the holy Messenger). (-VII: 158)

In *Sura-i-Saba*, the sacred Prophet is told that the guidance of the entire mankind had been entrusted to him and now it was his responsibility to impart to the world the knowledge of the good or evil consequence of life. He, alone, was now going to perform this duty.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا نَذِيرًا وَبَشِيرًا

And We have not sent thee (O Mohammad) save as a bringer of good tidings and a warner unto all mankind, (and now ye alone will perform this duty). (-XXXIV: 28)

And, in *Sura-i-Aal-i-Imran* the revered Prophet is inspired to proclaim that now the sole choice open to those who aspired to attain the cherished goal of God-realisation and were desirous of winning His good pleasure was that they followed him explicitly and observed the holy law and remained faithful to the way of life ordained by God for the current era and revealed through him. Anyone who was to turn away from the 'Straight Path', after this clear word had come to him from Above would be a transgressor and an offender against God and he would never be able to achieve salvation.

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ
قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ

Say, (O Mohammad, to mankind): If ye love Allah, follow me Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. Tell (them) clearly (that this is the only way): Obey God and the Prophet. But if they turn away, verily, Allah loveth not the disbelievers (in His guidance). (-III: 31-32)

In the same way, it is stated in *Sura-i-Ahzab* that the luminous line of the Apostles has been terminated with the Ministry

of Prophet Mohammad. He is the last of the Apostles and no Messenger of God is to be sent down after him. It, therefore, follows that, after the raising up of the sacred Prophet, his teachings alone are the Divine commandments for the whole of mankind.

وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

(Mohammad is the) Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets. (No Prophet is to be sent down after him). And Allah is Aware of all things. (-XXXIII: 40)

What has been said in the above verse about the universality and finality of the Apostleship of Prophet Mohammad has been duly confirmed by subsequent events.

Our world of hard facts will bear out that all the special virtues and portents on the basis of which the Apostleship of Abraham, Issac, David, Solomon, Moses, Jesus or any other Divine Messenger or Deliverer, raised up in any country or community, has been recognised were assembled in an ideal form in the sublime personality of the holy Prophet. This reality is so glaring and self-evident that even today, after the passage of thirteen hundred years, an impartial seeker of truth who cares to bestow a little thought on it can realise it for himself.

Similarly, the message and guidance brought by the sacred Prophet, which is unquestionably present to this day in its original form, intact and unsullied, is so comprehensive in scope and balanced in nature, that it is, in itself, enough to show that it is intended for the whole world and the entire humanity.

Moreover, during the thirteen centuries that have elapsed since the advent of the Prophet there has not appeared a single person, in any part of the world, who may have been recognised as a Divine Apostle or Messenger, and this, coupled with the fact that although so much time has passed since the holy Prophet was raised up in Arabia his teachings are as sound and

valid as they were at the time of their revelation, is a most solid and incontrovertible proof of the truth and veracity of the assertion that the Great Sender of the Prophets had terminated the glorious Order of Apostleship with the raising up of the sacred Prophet, and now it is the age of his Ministry, and his teachings will hold good as the Divine guidance for all people and the mercy of the Lord and His good pleasure will be gained, during this last phase of the existence of the world, only by following him and carrying out his commands.

MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Quran maintains that the place and position of the holy Apostles and the nature and significance of their mission should, also, be appreciated properly.

The greatest disrespect of the Prophets is that their Divine inspiration and Apostleship be challenged and the law and guidance they bring from God denied and rejected. The Quran regards it to be as much an act of apostasy at the denial of God Himself and asserts that those who are guilty of it will meet the same fate on the Day of Requital as the disbelievers in God. They will have no share in Divine Mercy and Forgiveness.

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ حَقًّا وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا عَنِئًا ۝

Such are disbelievers in truth; and for disbelievers We prepare a shameful doom. (—IV : 151)

It is revealed in *Sura-i A'araf* that among the basic instructions that were given to the human race at the time it began its career on the earth, with the sending down of Adam and Eve, it was included that :

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْوَالِدِيْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَتّٰى يَمُوتَ وَاَنْتُمْ عَلٰى مَا كُنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ فِىْ سُلْبِكُمْ فَانْقَلِبُوْا اِلَيْهِمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحَابُ الْاَنْفُسِ الَّتِيْ نَفْسُكُمْ فِيْهَا كَانَتْ لَكُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ رُجْعُكُمُ الْمَوْتَ ۝

○ Children of Adam! If Messengers of your own (community) come unto you who narrate unto you My revelations then whosoever refraineth from evil and amendeth—there shall no fear come upon

them neither shall they grieve. But they who deny Our revelations and scorn them—such are rightful owners of the Fire; they will abide therein. (—VII ; 35-36)

About those who disbelieve the revelations of God and deride His Messengers, the Quran tells :

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفْعَلُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ
النَّارِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ

Verily, those who deny Our revelations and scorn them, for them the gates of Heaven will not be opened nor will they enter the Garden until the camel goeth through the needle's eye. (Meaning that it is as impossible for them to enter the Gardens of Eternity as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle). (—VII : 40)

On the other hand, those who bear faith in the Divine Apostles and lead a life of piety and uprightness by following their guidance are given the joyful tidings of being the inheritors of the Gardens of Paradise.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَا نُخْلِفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا أَوْسَعَهَا ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

But, (as for) those who believe and do good works (i. e., observe the teachings of the Divine Apostles in thought as well as in deed,—and there is nothing impossible or very difficult in it—for) We tax not any soul beyond its scope; such are the rightful owners of the Garden. They will abide therein. (—VII : 42)

When the blessed ones who follow the Prophets and abide by their teachings will gain the promised reward of Heaven, they will bow down in gratitude to their Lord and on their lips will be the song of praise and thankfulness for His Messengers.

الحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدانا لهذا وَمَا كنا لَنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنْ هَدانا اللَّهُ
لَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلٌ مِنَّا بِالْحَقِّ

And they will say : The praise to Allah, Who hath guided us to this.
We could not truly have been led aright if Allah had not guided
us. Verily, the Messengers of our Lord did bring the Truth.
(—VII : 43)

In fine, the Quran informs that the denial and repudiation of the holy Apostles and the guidance brought by them is an unpardonable sin in the sight of Allah. Like the deniers of God the punishment for the deniers of the Prophets, too, is the eternal fire of Hell and they shall never be able to enter the Gardens of Eternity which are exclusively for those who believe in the Divine Messengers and conduct their lives in accordance with their teachings.

مَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ ۚ فَمَنْ آمَنَ وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۝ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُمْسِكُهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ۝

We send not the Messengers save as bearers of good news (to those who obey) and warners (to those who go astray). Whoso believeth and doeth right, there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve. But as for those who deny Our revelations, torment will afflict them for their disobedience and transgression. (-VI: 48-49)

Apart from the explicit warnings, the Quran also tells that in the past, no mercy was shown to the communities or their leaders who defied the Messengers of God and rejected their Guidance. They had to bear the full consequences of their intransigence. In *Sura-i-Sad*, for example, the names of the Pharaoh and of the tribes of Noah, A'ad, Thamud and Shoeb are mentioned specifically and their guilt and the punishment meted out to them is recounted in these words:

لَا يَنْفَعُ كُلُّ إِيَّاهُ كَذَبَ الرُّسُلِ فَحَقَّ عِقَابُهَا

Not one of them but did deny the Messengers; therefore My Punishment (which came down upon them) was justified. (-XXXVIII: 15)

And, in *Sura-i-Al-Haqqah*, it is related about the Pharaoh and some other well-known deniers of the Prophets that:

فَعَصَوْا رَسُولَ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَخَذَهُمْ أَخْذَةً رَابِيَةً

And they disobeyed the Messenger of their Lord; therefore did He catch hold of them with a tightening grip. (-LXIX: 10)

The height of impertinence against the Prophets, therefore, is that they are scoffed at and their teachings are repudiated. According to the Quran, it amounts to apostasy which can never be excused. The second grade of insolence is that their teachings are not acted upon properly. This, too, is highly sinful and those who are guilty of it should be prepared for a painful punishment which can overtake them at any time.

فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۝

Let those who conspire to evade the orders (of the Prophet) beware lest grief or painful punishment befall them. (-XXIV: 63)

It occurs over and over again in the Quran that when people are exhorted to obey God, they are called upon with an equal emphasis to obey the Prophet as well.

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ

Obey Allah, and obey the Prophet. (-IV: 59)

وَأِنْ تُطِيعُوا تَهْتَدُوا

If ye obey the Prophet ye will go aright. (XXIV: 54)

In other words, those who disobey the Prophet and do not abide by his teachings will never be successful in the seeking of Truth. They will be lost forever.

وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُبِينًا

Whoso is rebellious to Allah and His Messenger, he verily goeth astray in error manifest. (-XXXIII: 36)

Complete submission to Allah and His Messenger and whole-hearted compliance of their orders is an essential prerequisite of faith. Without it, no one can become a believer.

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّى يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي
أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيَسَلُّوا لَسَانًا

(O Prophet)! By the Lord, they can never become believers until they make thee judge in their disputes, and, then, find within themselves no dislike of that which you may decide (in such disputes), but submit to it with full submission. (-IV: 65)

To become a believer one must accept without demur the judgement of the Prophet, be it in his favour or against him, and abide by his orders cheerfully, whether they are of a positive or negative nature. Otherwise, one should remember that the punishment of God is severe.

وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

And whatsoever the Prophet giveth you, take it. And whatsoever he forbiddeth, abstain from it. And (in this regard) keep your duty to Allah. Verily, Allah is stern in reprisal. (-LIX: 7)

The Prophet has a greater claim on the believers than their own selves. Even if the Prophet gave them an order which involved the risk of life they should carry it out sincerely.

الْبَيْتِ أَوَّلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَلْسِنِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ

The Prophet has a greater claim over the believers than their selves: and his wives are (as) their mothers. (-XXXIII: 6)

Allah is our Lord and Creator and we are His slaves. Our life and property belong to Him first, and only then to us. He has a greater claim over them than we have, and since the Prophets are His deputies and vicegerents it is natural that they, too, should enjoy the same rights. Moreover, their wives are as mothers to the believers and due respect should, therefore, be shown to them also.

The believers, again, are instructed to behave with deference in the presence of the Prophet. They should keep their voice low and speak to him with meekness and humility lest they incurred the displeasure of God and their good-doing might, ultimately, avail them nothing.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَابَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ
كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَن تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ (إِنَّ الَّذِينَ
يَغْضُونَ أَصْوَابَهُمْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ
لَلتَّقْوَىٰ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ)

O ye who believe! Lift not up your voices above the voice of the Prophet nor shout when speaking to him as ye shout to one another, lest your (good) works be rendered vain (by this rudeness) while ye may not even be aware of it. Surely, those who subdue their voices in the presence of the Messenger of Allah, those are they whose hearts Allah hath proven unto righteousness. Their's will be forgiveness and an immense reward. (-XLIX: 2-3)

EXAGGERATED ADULATION

With all this, the veneration of the Prophets should be kept within proper limits. There ought to be no exaggerated adulation of them, nor extravagant notions entertained about their nature, being and attributes.

A misconception which has been common to many people is that a Prophet can never be a man; he must belong to some higher species and be completely free from human wants and other characteristics. A number of communities in the past have declined to believe in the Prophets of their day because of it. The Quran, for instance, tell that the chief objection raised against the Apostleship of Noah by the people to whom he was sent was that:

مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ

This is only a mortal like you (then how can he be an Apostle of God)? (-XXIII: 24)

When ignorance again engulfed the world after the death of Noah and God sent down another Apostle he, too, was rejected by his people on the same ground. Their chieftains cried out in protest :

مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يَأْكُلُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا تَشْرَبُونَ ۝

This is only a mortal like you who eateth whereof ye eat and drinketh of that ye drink. (XXIII : 33)

In *Sura-i-Taghabun* it is related about the pagans of the ancient times that the main reason of their rejection and heresay was the misbelief that a mere mortal could not be a Prophet.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُ كَانَتْ تَأْتِيهِمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَقَالُوا أَبَشَرٌ يَهْدُونَنَا فَكَفَرُوا وَتَوَلَّوْا

(Those who disbelieved of old, the cause of their disbelief was) that Messengers from Allah kept on coming to them with clear proofs of (Allah's sovereignty), but they said: Shall mere mortals guide us? So they disbelieved and turned away. (-LXIV : 6)

And in *Sura-i-Bani Israel* we, again, read as follows :

وَمَا مَنَعَهُ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمُ الْهُدَى إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ بَشَرًا رَسُولًا ۝

And naught prevented mankind from believing when the guidance came unto them save that they said: Hath Allah sent a mere mortal as His Messenger. (-XVII : 94)

Against the bringer of the Quran, the Last of the Prophets himself, the main objection of the deniers of Truth, also, was that :

مَلِي هَذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ

What sort of a Messenger is he that he eats and drinks (like us), and goes to the market (for his needs)? (-XXV : 7)

The implication, obviously, was that a Prophet should be above those things.

In brief, many a people have entertained the misconception about the Prophets that they could not be men but only angels or incarnations of God or belonging to some other holier class of God's creatures. The Quran has firmly put an end to this fallacy, and to set at rest all the doubts, finally and forever, the following verses have been addressed directly to the sacred Prophet :

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نَزَّحُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ

Nor did We send before thee (as Apostles) any but men whom We did inspire. (-XII : 109)

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا أَنْهُمْ لِيَاْكُلُوا الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشُوا فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ

We never sent before thee any Messengers, but lo! they ate food and walked in the markets (when they had the need to do so). (-XXV : 20)

The Prophet himself was commanded, again and again, to declare categorically that :

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ

I am only a mortal like you. (-XLI : 6)

Another common mistake was that it was supposed about the Prophets that they had power over all things in the world and could do about them whatever they liked. The Quran relates about the pagans of Mecca that owing to this misconception they used to say to the Prophet ;

لَوْ قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ بِكَ حَتَّى تُفْرَجَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ يَنْبُوعًا ۖ أَوْ تَكُونَ لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِنْ نَخِيلٍ وَعِنَبٍ فَتُفَجَّرَ الْأَنْهَارُ خِلَالَهَا تَفْجِيرًا ۖ أَوْ تُسْقِطَ السَّمَاءُ كَمَا زُعمَتْ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا أَوْ تَأْتِي بَالَهُ الْغُلَامَةُ قَبِيلًا ۖ أَوْ يَكُونَ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِنْ زُخْرَفٍ أَوْ تَرْفَى فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَنْ نُؤْمِنَ بِرُوحِكَ حَتَّى تُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتَابًا تُفَرِّقُ بِهِ

We, (the disbelievers), will not put faith in thee till thou cause a spring to gush forth from the earth for us ; Or thou have a garden of

datepalms and grapes, and cause the rivers to gush forth therein abundantly; Or thou cause the heavens to fall upon us in pieces, as thou warn us of, or bring Allah and the angels as a warrant; Or thou have a house of gold, or thou ascend up into heaven, and even then we will put no faith in thine ascension till thou bring down for us a book that we can read. (—XVII: 90-93)

In reply, the holy Prophet was inspired to tell them.

قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولًا

My Lord be glorified! (Am I God)? I am nothing save a mortal Messenger. (—XVII: 93)

Meaning, O unbelievers! Your basic fault is that you imagine about a Divine Apostle or Messenger that he has everything in his control and can cause whatever he likes to take place in the heavens and on the earth, although this is the sole prerogative of God. Allah, of course, is All-powerful, but a Prophet is a mere mortal, like you, whom God has chosen, out of His Mercy, to be His Messenger. On his part, also, the Prophet does not claim to be anything different.

When the pagans persisted in their demand for miracles, the holy Prophet was bidden to make it clear to them that the miracles were not his handiwork but of God.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ

Say: Portents are with Allah only (I have no control over them); I am but a plain warner. (—XXIX: 50)

قُلْ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ إِنِّي أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ

Say (O Mohammad, to the disbelievers): I say not unto you that I possess the treasures of Allah, nor that I have the knowledge of the Unseen; and I say not unto you that I am an angel. I follow only that which is inspired to me. (—VI: 50)

قُلْ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا رَشَدًا ۖ قُلْ إِنِّي لَنْ يُجِيرَنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ وَلَنْ أَجِدَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا

Say: I control not hurt nor benefit for you; (your gain or loss is not in my hands but in the hands of Allah). Say: (My own case is) that none can protect me from Allah, nor can I find any refuge beside Him. (—LXXII: 21-22)

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ لَاسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

Say: For myself I have no power to hurt, nor power to benefit, save that which Allah willeth; (Everything is dependent only on His Choice and Will). Had I knowledge of the Unseen, I should have abundance of wealth, and adversity would not touch me. I am but a warner, and a bearer of good tidings unto those who believe. (—VII: 188)

In these verses, all the false and exaggerated notions generally entertained with regard to the Prophets have been decisively rejected. But these notions have not yet died out totally and there are many even among the Muslims themselves, who, on account of their ignorance, still cherish them. They regard the Prophets to be supernatural beings who should have a full control over the treasures of God and a complete knowledge of the Unseen and be able to order about things as they wanted, not only in this world, but also in the next.

Before closing this chapter, we will take up a couple of more verses in which these myths and fanciful ideas have been exploded by the Quran in its typical, forthright manner:

قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدَعَاةِ الرُّسُلِ وَمَا أَدْرِي مَا يَفْعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ إِنِّي أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ

Say (O Mohammad): I am no new thing among the Messengers of Allah: (I am a Messenger of Allah in the same way in which so many other Messengers have come from Him in the past). (As

for myself), I do not know what is going to be done with me or with you (in the future), I do not but follow what is inspired to me, and I am but a plain warner. (—XLVI: 9)

In *Sura-i-Yunus* it is narrated that when the holy Prophet recited the Quran before the pagans and they refused to believe in him unless he brought forth a new Scripture or made 'appropriate' changes in it, he was instructed to tell them that :

قُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَبَدِّلَهُ مِنْ تِلْقَائِيْ نَفْسِيْ إِنْ أَتَيْتُهُ إِلَّا مَا يُوْحَىٰ إِلَيَّ لَرَبِّي
أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I only follow that which is revealed to me. Surely, if I disobey my Lord I (too) fear the retribution of an awful Day. (—X: 16)

The Quran, thus, has positively and emphatically disproved and refuted all the existing and possible misconceptions about Prophecy and Apostleship and made the world safe against their corrupting influence. For those, specially, who believe in and understand the Quran there should be no reason, now, to be led into an error about the place and position of the sacred Prophets and the nature and significance of their mission.

CHAPTER VII

SUBMISSION TO DIVINE GUIDANCE

Once a person has accepted that there is a God, who is the Lord Sovereign and Creator of all things, and affirmed faith in the Order of Apostleship He has given rise to for the guidance of His servants it becomes natural for him to resolve, as a matter of principle, that he will follow the Divine commandments faithfully and fashion his life in conformity with them. But the Quran does not take the naturalness or inevitability of it for granted. It calls on men, positively, to make the message and the law revealed by God through His chosen Apostles the guiding principle of their lives and regard no one aside of Him to be deserving of loyalty and obeisance, for this, alone, is the way to salvation and all the rest leads inexorably to degradation and doom.

قُلْ إِنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْهُدَىٰ وَأَمَّا إِنْ لَمْ يَهْدِ اللَّهَ فَلَيْسَ بِالْهُدَىٰ

(O Prophet)! Say (to mankind): Lo! the guidance of Allah is the (real) Guidance, and we are commanded to surrender to the Lord of the Worlds. (—VI: 71)

اتَّبِعُوا مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ

Follow that which is sent down unto you from your Lord, and follow no Protecting Friends beside Him (for Allah, alone, is the Protecting Friend and the Cherisher). (—VII: 3)

وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ
اتَّبِعُوا أَحْسَنَ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ بَغْتَةً
وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ

Turn unto Him repentant, and surrender unto Him, before there come unto you the doom, when ye cannot be helped. And

follow the best guidance which is revealed unto you from your Lord, before the doom cometh on you suddenly when ye know not. (—XXXIX: 54-55)

So much for the general exhortation regarding the guidance revealed by God. To see now what the Quran has to tell specifically about the end of those who abide by it and of those who turn away.

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ يَعْذَابُهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

And whoso obeyeth Allah and His Messenger, He will make him enter Gardens underneath which rivers flow; and whoso turneth back, him will He punish with a painful doom. (—XLVIII: 17)

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا

Whosoever obeyeth Allah and His Messenger, he verily hath gained a Signal Victory. (—XXXIII: 71)

The term 'Signal Victory' is defined in *Sura-i-Nissa* as follows:

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ
وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشَّاهِدِينَ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا

Whoso obeyeth Allah and the Messenger, they are with those unto whom Allah hath shown favour, of the Prophets and the saints and the martyrs and the righteous. The best of company they are! Such is the bounty of Allah, and Allah sufficeth as Knower. (—IV: 69-70)

What is more, the heavenly angels (those who bear the Throne and are around it all the time), when they sing the praises of the Lord, also beg forgiveness for His blessed servants and their forefathers, wives, and children, who have turned their faces away from everything else and made the submission to His law and commandments the sole guide to action in the world.

رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ
عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ رَبَّنَا وَأَدْخِلْهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ عَذْيٍ الَّتِي وَعَدْتَهُمْ وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ
أَبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ وَقِهِمُ النَّارَ
وَمَنْ تَقِ النَّارَ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمْنَا وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

Those who bear the Throne, and those who are round about it, hymn the praises of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe (saying): Our Lord! Thou comprehendest all things in mercy and knowledge, therefore forgive those who repent and follow Thy Way. Ward off from them the punishment of hell. Our Lord! And make them enter the Gardens of Eternity which Thou hast promised them, with such of their fathers and wives and descendants as do right! Verily, Thou, only Thou, art the Mighty, the Wise. (—XL: 7-8)

The ministering spirits who are closest to the Lord, thus, pray for the faithful servants of His, as a part of their duty,—and one can, of course, be sure that the Supreme Being, who has Himself enjoined on them to pray to Him, on their behalf, while singing His praises, will, also, accept it. This prayer has, evidently, been mentioned in the Quran with the object of conveying it to the world that so enviously blessed is the lot of those who follow the Divine guidance sincerely that it has been made obligatory by God for the angels who are nearest to Him to pray for their deliverance and felicity.

Conversely, the infelicity and wretchedness of the people who follow their desires instead of the guidance sent down by Allah has been portrayed in these words in the verses given below:

وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ اتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

And who goeth farther astray than he who followeth his lust as against guidance from Allah. Lo! Allah guideth not the wrong-doers. (—XXVIII: 50)

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ أَفَأَنْتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلًا ۖ أَمْ يُحْسِبُ أَنَّ الشِّرْكَاءَ يَسْمَعُونَ
أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا كَالْإِغْصَارِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ۚ

Have you seen him who chooseth for his god his own lust? Wouldst thou then be guardian over him? (He can never reform himself). Or, do you think that they, in the main, hear or understand? They are but as the cattle—nay, but they are farther astray. (—XXV : 43-44)

GOOD CONDUCT

Submission to God and the Prophet and the observance of the Divine Law find expression in a life of piety and good-doing. From the way stress is laid, on innumerable occasions, in the Quran jointly on faith and good conduct, it is clear that when both of these combine only then does that pattern of living emerge which is to the liking of Allah and can elevate us to the rank of His well-beloved servants. Cheerful tidings of such a felicitous nature have been given to those who practise virtue and do good deeds that it is impossible for a believer not to be stirred by them.

عَلَّ يَٰ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ نَزَّلْتُ الْوَحْيَ وَإِنِّي أَنَا الْبَاقِي ۚ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ سَعَوْا فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعْجِزِينَ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

Say : O mankind! I am only a plain Warner unto you. Those who believe and do good works, for them is pardon and a rich provision; while those who strive to thwart Our revelations, such are rightful owners of the Fire. (—XXII : 49-51)

وَلَنِّىْ لَغَفْلَةٌ لِّمَنِ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَىٰ

And lo! Verily I am Forgiving unto those who repent and believe and do good, and walk aright afterwards. (—XX : 82)

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَ
لَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَحْسَنَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ۚ

As for those who believe and do good works, We shall remit from their evil deeds and shall repay them far in excess of the good that they did. (—XXIX : 7)

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي
مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقًّا

But as for those who believe and do good works We shall bring them into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. It is a promise from Allah in truth; and who can be more truthful than Allah in utterance. (—IV : 122)

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي رَوْضَةٍ أَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ مَّا يَشَاءُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَلِكَ هُوَ
الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الَّذِي يُبَشِّرُ اللَّهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ

Those who believe and do good works will be in flowering meadows of the Gardens, having what they wish from their Lord. This is the great preferment : This it is which Allah announceth unto His bondmen who believe and lead a life of virtue. (XLII : 22-23)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا ۖ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا ۖ

Lo! Those who believe and do good works, theirs are the Gardens of Paradise for welcome, wherein they will abide forever. (Neither they will be ejected from them nor will they want to be removed from thence. (—XIX : 108-109) ?

وَمَنْ يَأْتِهِ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصَّالِحَاتِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجَاتُ
الْعُلَى ۖ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَ
ذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ مَنْ تَزَكَّى ۖ

Who cometh unto Him a believer, having done good works, for such are the high stations; Gardens of Eternity underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is reward of him who is free from the impurity of disbelief and wrong-doing. (—XX : 75-76).

The verses we have reproduced above contain the good tidings of Divine Mercy and Benevolence and of Paradise and its eternal bliss in the Hereafter for those who believe and do

good deeds. No boon or blessing can, of course, be more precious for one who has faith in After-life than Divine Forgiveness and a place in the Abode of the Blessed in the never-ending life of Futurity.

Even if it is assumed that there is no reward in this transitory existence for the believers who, also, lead a life of moral rectitude and they are going to be recompensed only in the Hereafter with what has been promised in the above verses, it will be, for them, an infinitely gainful bargain for which they will be grateful to their Creator from the bottom of their hearts. But in this material world, too, these devout bondmen of the Lord have been promised a marvellous recompense.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا

Lo ! those who believe and do good works, the Beneficent will appoint for them love. (XIX: 96)

Those who believe and do good deeds will, thus, be rewarded by God in this life, too, with His love, and He will engender feelings of affection for them in the hearts of His slaves also.

Can there be, so to speak, a greater blessing for any one in this world than that his heart was endued with sincere devotion to God, and God, too, selected him for His love and produced for him sentiments of affection among the people around him in general?

For men whose vision is restricted to material pleasures nothing may be more worthwhile in life than the possession of wealth and the enjoyment of other luxuries like delicious food and expensive clothes, but in the sight of those who have not become complete prisoners of their baser desires and instincts, it can be said without hesitation that a brief moment illumined by Divine love and affection of fellow-men is far more valuable than a lifetime of ease and affluence which is bereft of the celestial wealth of love, devotion and goodwill. One whom God has favoured with any measure of His love and good

pleasure alone can know what a magnificent boon it can be and how inestimably blissful does life become as a result of it. The Quran has given to such a life the name of 'good life'. It says :

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنشَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Whosoever doeth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him, verily, We shall quicken with good life, and We shall pay them (in the Hereafter) a recompense in proportion to the best of what they used to do. (—XVI: 97)

The 'good life' spoken of in the foregoing verse appertains to the material world. It is the same life of Divine love and tranquillity and the affection of fellow beings we have been discussing in the preceding lines, and, decidedly, it is the most glorious thing that can fall to the lot of any one on this side of death.

There is, however, another reward which is, also, conferred on the believers who lead a life of uprightness and good doing. God entrusts them with the government and administration of the lands they live in, and, then, they operate as His deputies and rule in accordance with His wish and command. But this reward is of a collective nature. It is not bestowed on individuals who are men of faith and do good works, but if a nation or community chooses for itself, on the whole, a life of faith and righteous conduct, God invariably favours it with power and rule :

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ
فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ

Allah hath promised such of you as believe and do good works that He will surely make them to succeed (the present rulers) in the earth as He caused those who were before them to succeed (others). (—XXIV: 55)

It is, thus, the eternal law of God that if there exists a community which is, in the main, distinguished by a life of faith and righteousness, He vests it with power and favours it with His Vicegerency on the earth. It was like that before the revelation of the Quran, and after the revelation of the Quran, too, it is going to be the same.

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ

And verily We have written in Scripture (Zaboor), after the Reminder: My righteous slaves will inherit the earth. (—XXI: 105)

WARNING

It does not, however, mean that it is the good and the virtuous, alone, who always inherit the earth, and if a group or community is in power anywhere in the world it, of necessity, is a proof of its moral and spiritual excellence. What the above verses signify, as we have pointed out earlier, is that it is the practice of God that He blesses those who believe and do good deeds with the governance of the earth. This is a reward for them from their Lord as well as an opportunity for greater moral and spiritual advancement.

CHAPTER VIII

PIETY

Piety forms part of the basic essentials of Quranic guidance. After belief in God, the Prophets and the Hereafter, the most important duty in Islam is that one should fear God and observe piety. The Quran has described it as an indispensable condition to man's deliverance and salvation.

Piety means that while believing in the Great Requital of the Last Day and fearing the anger and displeasure of God, one should conduct oneself in a responsible and conscientious manner in all the walks of life.

It is related that once Caliph Omar enquired from an eminent Companion of the holy Prophet, Ubai-bin-Ka'ab, who was known for his understanding of the Quran, what piety was. The noted Companion replied, "Have you ever chanced to walk on a thorny path?" "Of course", remarked the Caliph. "Quite a number of times". "What did you do then?" asked Ubai-bin-Ka'ab. Hazrat Omar said, "I bore myself with due care, held my clothes tightly and did all I could to pass through it safely". "This is just what piety means," observed the venerable Companion.

It is not easy to improve on the above definition of piety. Some of the Quranic verses in which people are called upon to cultivate it read as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقْوَاهُ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

O ye who believe! Fear God as He should be feared, and (observe your duty to Him throughout your life till) death comes to you in a state of Islam. (III: 102)

God who is the Creator and the Cherisher of the world and to whom belongs the entire pattern of life and death and whose Anger and Punishment also are as unbounded as His Mercy and Benevolence—the believers ought to fear Him as such a master should be feared by his slaves, and remain loyal to Him till the end of their lives.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَأَسْمِعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا

So fear God as you can, and listen and obey (His commands with your heart and soul). (—LXIV : 16)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

O ye who believe! Fear God, and let every soul look to what (provision) he has sent for the morrow (the Hereafter). Yes, fear God! Lo! God is well acquainted with all that ye do. (—LIX : 18)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O ye who believe! Fear God, and seek the way of approach unto Him, and strive in His way in order that ye may succeed. (—V : 35)

In all of these verses emphasis is not merely laid in a general way on the observance of piety but its implications are also brought out candidly for the benefit of those who believe. In the first verse, the believers are told to remain faithful to God till the end of their time; in the second the commandment, "Listen and obey" signifies the same thing; in the third, they are enjoined to keep a close watch on their conduct and prepare earnestly for the life to come; in the fourth, the exhortation is given that the path of nearness unto God should be pursued unfailingly; and, finally, the assurance of "success" is held out to men of piety which includes both the worlds.

In hundreds of other verses the nature and significance of the good fortune that is going to crown the strivings in this world, as well as the next, of those who believe, and, also, practise piety has been explained, in detail, in the Quran.

لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَأَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

For those who fear God and keep from evil, with their Lord, are Gardens underneath which rivers flow, and pure companions, and good pleasure of Allah. Allah keeps a close watch on His bondmen. (He knows well who is pious and who is not). (—III : 15)

In addition to a place in Paradise, the very special tidings of the "Good pleasure of Allah" are, also, contained in the above-mentioned verse for the believers who lead a life of piety and uprightness, which is a far more enthralling prospect than all the blessings one can think of in the present as well as the future existence.

وَلِنَعْمَدَ الْبَارِئِينَ ۖ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا يُجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاءُونَ ۚ كَذَلِكَ يَجْزِي اللَّهُ الْمُتَّقِينَ

Pleasant, indeed, will be the home of those who ward off evil—Gardens of Eternity which they enter, underneath which rivers flow, wherein they have what they will. Thus Allah repayeth those who ward off evil. (—XVI : 30-31)

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَنَهَرٍ ۖ فِي مَقْعَدِ صَدَقٍ عِنْدَ مِلْكٍ مُقْتَدِرٍ

Lo! the righteous will dwell among gardens and rivers (in the Hereafter), firmly established in the favour of a Mighty Sovereign. (—LIV : 54-55)

How enviable, indeed, is the lot of the servants of the Lord

who, together with all the celestial luxuriousness of the Gardens of Eternity, will, also, be rewarded with a place of exceptional nearness to Him.

In the verses we have discussed so far, the believers who fear God and observe their duty to Him are given the joyful tidings only of the favours they will be requited with in the Hereafter. But there are other verses which tell that there is a special favour of God on them in the existing world also, as for example :

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

O ye who believe! If ye keep your duty to Allah, He will give you discrimination (between right and wrong) and will rid you of your evil thoughts and deeds, and will forgive you. Allah is of Infinite Bounty. (—VIII : 29)

The word, *Furqan*, in the above verse, which literally means the *Criterion*, commands a wide range of significance. The English translators of the Quran have generally, used phrases like, 'power of discrimination', and 'quality of distinction', to explain its meaning. The instinctive perception of good and evil and the ability to draw a line between what is allowed and what is not as well as the extra-ordinary grace and dignity which characterises the personality of the devout servants of the Lord and evokes love and reverence for them in the hearts of others, and the very special help of God which enables them to be miraculously successful in their endeavours—all these are covered by it. The Lord Creator has promised these matchless rewards to His virtuous slaves in this life in addition to forgiveness in the Hereafter.

And, in *Sura-t-A'araf*, it is set forth :

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ

And if the people of the townships had believed and kept from evil,

surely, We would have opened for them blessings from the sky and from the earth. (VII : 96)

It is the practice of God that if the people of a place or country take to a life of faith and righteousness. He opens for them the doors of the blessings of the heavens and the earth. The blessings that are related to the heavens pour down upon them from the heavens while the blessing that are related to the earth spring forth for them from the earth.

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا ۖ وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

And for those who fear God, He (ever) prepares a way out (from difficulties and hardships), and He provides for him from sources he could never imagine. (—LXV : 2-3) ?

The Quran, again, reveals that those who lead a life of faith and righteousness become the "Friends of God", and then, there is neither fear for them nor shall they grieve.

لَا يَأْتِيهِمْ أَهْلٌ أَوْ لِيَاءٌ ۚ اللَّهُ لَا يَخَفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۚ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ۚ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ

Behold! Verily, on the friends of God there is no fear nor shall they grieve, those who believe, and (constantly) guard against evil,— for them are Glad Tidings, in the life of the Present and the Hereafter. (—X : 62-64)

To be a "Friend of God" is, by all means, a very great honour, but even a greater honour is that God Himself has declared that He is their Friend.

وَاللَّهُ مَوْلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ

Allah is the Friend of those who ward off evil. (XLV : 19)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾

Lo ! Allah is with those (and their Friend) who keep their duty unto Him and those who are doers of good. (-XV 1: 128)

What greater glory can there be for any one than that God Himself may declare that He is his Friend and constant Companion ?

PIETY IS THE ESSENCE OF VIRTUE

The Quran maintains that piety is the essence of virtue and the measuring yard of all goodness.

وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ اتَّقَىٰ

But the righteous man is he who fears God and wardeth off evil. (-II : 189)

Hence, when the ceremony of the slaughter of animals (at the time of the Haj pilgrimage) is prescribed in the Quran, it is made abundantly clear that it is not the flesh and blood of the slaughtered animals that matters but the spirit of sincerity and devotion (i. e., piety) behind the act. The flesh and blood of the animals does not reach God; only the earnestness with which the ritual is performed reaches Him, and it is all that counts.

لَنْ يَنَالَهُ اللَّهُ شَيْءٌ مِنْكُمْ وَلَا دِمَائُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ

The flesh and the blood (of the animals you sacrifice) does not reach God, but the devotion from you reacheth Him. (-XXII : 37)

We are assured that God accepts only the deeds that are performed by men of piety and in a spirit of piety, that is, they are motivated solely by the desire to earn His good pleasure and an earnest solicitude for the Hereafter.

إِنَّمَا يَقْبَلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

Allah accepteth only from those who observe piety and ward off evil. (-V : 27)

The Quran makes use of both the persuasive and the dissuasive methods while giving the call of piety. It encourages men to cultivate the fear of God by holding forth, at one place, happy assurances of Divine benevolence, forgiveness and Paradise, and, at the other, by dilating, at proper length, upon the fearful happenings of the Last Day and the Great Requit. To refer, first, to a few verses belonging to the latter category :

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٠٠﴾
يَوْمَ تَرَوُنَّهَا تُدْخِلُ كُلُّ مَرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَ تَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَ تَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارَىٰ وَ مَا هُمْ بِسُكَارَىٰ وَلَكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ ﴿١٠١﴾

O mankind ! Fear your Lord ! for the convulsion of the Hour will be a fearful thing ! the Day ye shall see it : every mother giving suck shall forget her suckling-babe, and every pregnant female shall drop her load unformed ! thou shall see mankind as in a drunken riot, yet not drunk ! But dreadful shall be the wrath of God. (-XXII : 1-2)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ وَ اخْشَوْا يَوْمًا لَا يَجْزِي وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَلَدِهِ وَ لَوْلَا ذُوهُوَ جَارٌ عَنْ وَالِدِهِ شَيْئًا إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَ لَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْفُرُورُ ﴿٣٣﴾

O mankind ! keep your duty to your Lord and fear the Day when the parent will not be able to avail the child in aught, nor the child to avail the parent. Lo ! Allah's promise is the very truth. Let not the life of the world beguile you, nor let the deceiver (the Devil) beguile you in regard to Allah. (-XXXI : 33)

In both of these verses the frightful events of the Day of Final Reckoning have been narrated so clearly and forcefully that if we still remain unaffected by them and these Quranic revelations fail to inspire in us a genuine fear of God and an earnest anxiety for the Hereafter, our hearts must, surely, be dead. In a number of other verses, attention is drawn, with

the same object, to the immensity and boundlessness of the Power and Authority of God, and of His Anger and Punishment.

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

Fear God and observe your duty to Him; and know that God is severe in Punishment. (-II : 196)

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

Keep your duty to Allah! Allah is severe in Punishment. (-V : 2)

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

Observe your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is swift to take account. (-V : 4)

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ

Keep your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah knoweth what is hidden in the breasts (of men). (-V : 8)

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

Observe your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is informed of all that ye do. (-V : 8)

Furthermore, we are told that all men shall one day be gathered before God who is Aware of all things. Such being the case, we should not be heedless of keeping our duty to Him so that we may not be in the loss when the fateful Hour strikes.

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

Be careful of your duty to Allah, and know that unto Him ye will be gathered. (-II : 203)

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُلْقَوْنَ

Fear Allah, and know that ye will (one day) meet Him. (-II : 223)

Next, we will take up the verses in which the happy tidings of Divine Munificence and Forgiveness of heavenly bliss of the Gardens of Eternity are given to those who fear God and practise piety, and, through them, people are aroused to observe their duty to God and keep away from evil.

وَلَنْ تَصْلَحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

If ye do good and keep from evil; Lo! Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful. (-IV : 129)

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَحِيمٌ

And keep your duty to Allah; Lo! Allah is Relenting. Merciful. (-XLIX : 12)

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

Observe your duty to Allah that haply ye may obtain mercy. (-XLIX : 10)

Along with Mercy and Forgiveness, the love of God is also promised to those who observe virtue and uprightness.

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ وَاتَّقَىٰ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

Nay, but the chosen of Allah is he who fulfilleth his pledge and wardeth of evil; for, lo! Allah loveth those who ward off evil. (-III : 76)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

Verily! Allah loveth those who keep their duty unto Him. (-IX : 4)

The Divine Munificence spoken of in the above verses will reveal itself in the Hereafter which is the world of Requital, but a part of it can be experienced in this life too. We have already seen a few verses appertaining to it. Here is one more.

وَلَنْ تَصِيرُوا وَاتَّقُوا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُ هُمْ شَيْئًا
إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ

But if ye persevere and keep from evil their guile (and evil designs) will never harm you (for Allah is your Protecting Friend). Surely, Allah is surrounding what they do. (—III : 120)

For such men who are patient and persevering and abstain from what is prohibited the assurance of the Quran is that God will be their helper against their enemies and keep them safe from their intrigues.

Moreover, when the devout servants of the Lord die, their souls are at peace and the angels that come to cause death first salute them and convey to them the tidings of the eternal Abode of Paradise.

كَذَلِكَ يُجْزِي اللَّهُ الْمُتَّقِينَ ۚ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّيْتُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ طَيِّبِينَ
يَقُولُونَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ۝

Thus Allah repayeth those who ward off evil. When the angels come to them to cause death, they say : Peace be unto you ! Enter the Gardens of Eternity because of the good deeds you used to do. (—XVI : 31-32)

Men of piety will be received with great honour and ceremony at the gates of Heaven. The warders of the Celestial Gardens will greet them with open arms and ask them to enter and make in them their eternal home.

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا
وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طَابْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا خَالِدِينَ

And those who keep their duty to their Lord are driven unto the Gardens in troops till, when they reach it, and the gates thereof are opened

and the warders thereof say unto them : Peace be unto you ! You are good, so enter ye (the Garden of Delight) to dwell therein. (—XXXIX : 73)

Amidst this celestial pomp and ceremony, the pious and the virtuous will inherit the Kingdom of God, and, as they will step into it, their hearts will be overflowing with gratitude and they will exclaim :

وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهُ وَأَوْرَثَنَا الْأَرْضَ نَتَبَوَّأُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاءُ ۝

Praise be to Allah, Who hath fulfilled His promise unto us and hath made us inherit the land, sojourning in the Garden where we will. (—XXXIX : 74)

All said and done, no one in this world can know exactly what wonderful boons and pleasures are going to be conferred on those, in the future existence, who fear God and observe their duty to Him. Nevertheless, the verses we have reproduced above are quite sufficient to impart a rough idea of them and to inspire in us a sincere desire to lead a life of unalloyed devotion and loyalty to God. Let us refresh our faith with yet another verse of a similar import.

لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهِبُوا يَدَيْهِمْ وَأَنْ يَسْتَعْتَبُوا مِنْهُمْ لَأَنْزِلُ الْأَنْبَابَ مُبْرِجِينَ
فِيهَا يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ وَشَرَّابٍ ۖ وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَصِيرَاتُ الْكَوْكَبِ
أَنْزَابٍ ۖ هَذَا مَا تُوْعَدُونَ لِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ ۚ إِنَّ هَذَا لَرْزَقُنَا آتَاكَ مِنْ تَفَافُتٍ

And, lo, who ward off evil is a happy journey's end, Gardens of Eden whereof the gates are opened for them, wherein reclining they call for plenteous fruit and cool drink that is therein. That it is what ye are promised for the Day of Reckoning. Verily, this is Our provision, which will never waste away. (—XXXVIII : 50-55)

The Quran goes on to make another important observation. It says that piety is the sole criterion of honour and superiority with God. A man, in the estimation of Allah, is as good and noble as he is advanced in piety, and as base and worthless as he is wanting in it.

لَإِنْ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَرُّوْا

Verily, the most honoured in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous of you. (—XLIX : 13)

The reason is not far to seek, for piety is the quality which holds back a man sinful and prohibited acts in the shunning of which lies the good pleasure of God, and promotes in him the moral and spiritual virtues with which His loving kindness is associated.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES AND QUALITIES

Piety, essentially, is a quality of the heart, but the life of purity and discipline it gives rise to is, also, often described by the same name.

The effects of piety on the everyday life of a man and the traits and qualities which distinguish those who observe it have been enumerated at various places in Quran.

هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ۚ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ۚ

This is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off evil; who believe in the Unseen and establish worship, and spend (in Our way) of what We have bestowed upon them, and who believe in that which is revealed unto thee (Prophet Mohammad) and that which was revealed before thee, and are certain of the Hereafter. (—II : 2-4)

The three broad characteristics of men of piety, as laid down above, are as follows: they believe firmly in the transcendental truths as revealed by God, through His Apostles, and which a man cannot know on his own, such as, the Existence of God, His Attributes, the Day of Resurrection, and the Hereafter, and Heaven and Hell; they offer *Namaz* regularly and in a befitting manner; and, they spend of the wealth God has granted to them in His path and according to His wishes. If none of these qualities are present in a person, it is obvious that his heart is devoid of the attribute of righteousness.

And, again :

وَلْيَكُنْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ
وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَ
الْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ
الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ الْمُوَفُّونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا ۚ
وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَيْمَانِهِمْ أَتَى الْبَيْعَ وَالصَّرَافَ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ
صَدَقُوا ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

The righteous is he who believeth in Allah, and the Last Day and the Angels and the Scriptures and the Prophets; and giveth his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, and to those who ask, and to set slaves free: and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due: and those who fulfil their promises when they make one and are patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing. (—II : 177)

In the above verse, we are told that the righteous and the God-fearing are those who believe in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels and the Scriptures and in the entire Order of Apostleship, and spend, for His sake, their wealth, in spite of the innate fondness for it, on poor and needy relatives and other indigent persons, like the beggars, the orphans and the travellers, and on setting free the servants of the Lord from the bond of slavery, and establish regular worship, and pay the poor-due, and are truthful, and keep up their promises, and bear the trials and sufferings patiently in the path of God, and remain constant and steadfast in their faith in all conditions and circumstances.

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمُوتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ۚ
الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالصَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُظَّيْمِينَ الْغُلَظَّاءِ وَالْعِزَّةِ وَالْهَرَبِ ۚ
يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاجِرَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا
لِنُفُوسِهِمْ وَمَن يَغْفِرِ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ۚ

O mankind! Vie with one another for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Paradise as wide as are the heavens and the earth which has been prepared for those who are righteous—those who spend

of that which Allah hath given them in ease and in adversity, those who control their wrath and are forgiving to mankind: Allah loveth those who are good; and (those too are included among the righteous) who, when they do an evil thing or wrong themselves, remember Allah and implore forgiveness for their sins—who forgiveth sins save Allah only?—and do not knowingly repeat the wrong they did. (—III : 133-35)

What distinguishes the righteous from the rest of mankind, as we learn, once more, from the above verse, is that they remember God, both "in ease and in adversity", and spend of their wealth as desired by Him, and are disposed, in their personal lives, to keep their anger under control and to forgive those who offend against them. Moreover, such of the believers are, also, included among the pious and the God-fearing who feel genuinely sorry if they are ever misled by the Devil or their own baser instincts into committing a sin or an act of transgression against the law of God, and instead of persisting in their evil-doing turn to God with sincere repentance and seek His forgiveness.

لَئِنْ الْبَازِينَ اتَّقُوا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ ظِلْفٌ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ ۝

Lo ! In whose hearts there is piety, when a temptation from the Devil troubleth them they at once remember (Allah and His guidance) and their spiritual insight is awakened (and they manage to get out of his trap). (—VII : 201)

Those who are blessed with piety will further hold in reverence all the things, persons or institutions that are associated with God, like the sacred Scriptures, the Apostles, the holy men, the mosques, the House of Ka'aba and the Name of Allah. This is also one of the indications of the presence of righteousness in a man.

وَمَنْ يُعْظَمْ شَعَارَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ ۝

Whoso magnifieth what is consecrated to God, it surely is a sign of the devotion of the hearts (i. e., piety). (—XXII : 32)

It is set forth in *Sura-i-Hujurat* about those who conduct themselves with respect in the presence of the holy Prophet that :

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَخْضَعُونَ لِأَصْوَاتِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ۝

They who (out of respect) subdue their voices in the presence of the Apostle of Allah, those are they whose hearts Allah has proven unto righteousness. Theirs will be forgiveness and an immense reward. (—XLIX : 3)

From the foregoing it would follow that people who behaved in a scurrilous manner towards the holy Prophet or other persons or things specifically devoted to God were wholly lacking in piety and righteousness.

Before we wind up the discussion, here is one more verse :

إِنَّ السَّائِقِينَ فِي جَنَّتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ۝ أَخَذِينَ مَا آتَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُجْسِمِينَ ۝ كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ ۝ وَبِالْأَصْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ ۝ وَفِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِلْسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُورِ ۝

Verily, the righteous will dwell amid gardens and watersprings, receiving the bounties and blessings which their Lord bestoweth on them; for, lo, aforetime they were doers of good; they used to sleep but little of the night (spending most of their time in worship and remembrance of God), and at the dawning of each day would (again) seek forgiveness, and in their wealth the beggar and the outcast would have their due share. (—II : 15-19)

One more characteristic of the devout bondmen of the Lord, thus, is that they sleep but little in the night and devote a larger part of it to prayer and repentance, and even then they do not grow complacent or self-satisfied, but after spending the night in such a manner, seek the forgiveness of God at day-break, considering themselves still to be nothing more than shirkers and defaulters in the observance of their duty to Him, and make the

needy and helpless fellowmen, who may have fallen on evil days due to illness or some other misfortune, the sharers of their wealth.

By pooling together these verses we can obtain a full picture of the life of virtue and devotion to Allah. May the Almighty imbue our hearts with the love of good-doing and cast our lives in the mould of the righteous and favour our friends and descendants, too, with the wealth of piety!

CHAPTER IX

WORSHIP

Worship of God is one of the fundamental duties on which all the religions are agreed.

By worship we mean the different acts of reverence a man performs with the object of paying his humble homage to the Glory and Magnificence of the Lord, and expressing his own humbleness, such as, in Islam, we have *Namaz* (Prayer), *Roza* (Fasting), *Haj* (Pilgrimage to Mecca), *Zakat* (Poor-due); *Sadaqat* (Charity), *Zikr* (Repeating the Names and Praises of God), *Tilawat* (Recitation of the Quran) and *Qurbani* (Sacrifice of Animals). All these deeds of devotion are carried out by a man solely to pay reverent service to his Creator and for his own spiritual benefit, or, in other words, so that the Lord may be pleased with him, and confer His special favours upon him, and his soul may gain in purity and refinement and develop an affinity with the celestial world.

Among the good deeds of man, worship alone enjoys the privilege of being related directly to God. It is exclusively of Him and for Him; for the seeking of His countenance and affirmation of one's own devotion and loyalty through worship that man, born as he is, of a filthy drop of fluid and made up of clay, succeeds in acquiring the access and producing within himself the live contact with his Creator which is the monopoly of the dwellers of the heavenly world. Thus it is that all the religions have demanded of their followers to worship God and declared it to be the most sacred and elevated act of mankind.

Worship can be divided into three categories: wholly physical, wholly monetary, and mixed.

In the first category are included acts of worship for the carrying out of which no money is required and which are rela-

ted wholly to man's physical self, like prostration before the Almighty, prayer, fasting and circumambulation around the House of Ka'aba. The second denotes such acts as are performed solely by spending money in the way of God and no physical effort is needed for them, such as, *Zakat* (Poor-due) and other acts of monetary good-doing. To the third category belong the deeds for which both physical and monetary endeavour is called for, as for instance, the *Haj* and *Omra*, i.e., (pilgrimage to Mecca undertaken at any time of the year except on the occasion of the *Haj*).

Deeds of worship belonging to the three categories, mentioned above, have been enjoined on mankind through all the sacred Apostles and Scriptures. Their forms may have varied from time to time and place to place but so far as the basic command of worship is concerned it has been with us throughout the entire course of our earthly career. Prayer and charity have, particularly, been given a place of importance in every structure of Divine Law.

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَيْمَنَةً يَهْدُونَ يَا أُمَمْنَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ
إِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا تَارِعِينَ

And We made them chiefs who guide (their communities) by Our Command, and We inspired in them the doing of good deeds, (specially) the right establishment of worship and the giving of alms, and they were worshippers of Us (alone). (—XXI : 73)

وَقَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ أَقَسْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِي
وَعَزَّزْتُمْ حُرُمَاتِي فَرَضًا حَسَنًا أَفْرَضْتُمْ اللَّهُ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَكُمْ وَلَكُمْ
بِهِ نِعْمَةٌ جَدِيدٌ تَجْعَلُنِي مِنْكُمْ قَوْمًا مُسْلِمِينَ

And Allah said (to them) : Lo ! I am with you if ye establish worship and pay the poor-due, and believe in My Messengers (who will be sent down by Me subsequently), and support them (in their religious endeavours), and lend unto Allah a kindly loan, surely, I shall remit your sins (because of these good deeds of yours), and surely, I shall bring you into Gardens underneath which rivers flow. (—V : 12)

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ
وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ

And they were ordered naught else than to serve Allah, keeping religion pure for Him, as men by nature upright, and to establish prayers and to pay the poor-due. That is true religion.

(—XCVIII : 5)

Worship, thus, is an essential pre-requisite of the religious pattern of things and every community in the world has been ordained, through the holy Apostles, to offer it up regularly. And this is not so because God, in any way, stands in need of our prayers. Our devotional performances do no good to Him or add anything to His Glory. It is, on the other hand, wholly for our own benefit that we have been commanded to establish worship in our midst. God has enjoined it on us simply because it leads to our spiritual uplift and purifies our souls and strengthens our awareness of Him.

Thus, the exhortation addressed specifically in *Surat-ul-Ahzab* to the holy wives of the sacred Prophet is brought to an end with these words :

وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ
الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

(O ye wives of the Prophet !) Be regular in prayer and pay the poor-due, and obey Allah and His Messenger. (From this exhortation and these commandments) Allah's wish is but to remove uncleanness from you, O Folk of the (Prophet's) Household, and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing. (—XXXIII : 33)

Worship, in short, was prescribed for the earlier religious communities and has been made obligatory for us (the Muslims), too, for no other reason than that our souls may be purified through it and we may become worthy of gaining propinquity of God and earning His love and favour.

After these brief introductory remarks, let us take up some of the verses containing the command of worship.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

O ye who believe! Bow down and prostrate yourselves, and worship your Lord, and do good, that haply ye may prosper. (—XXII: 77)

Here, too, we are told that worship has been ordained for mankind for its own benefit and the fulfilment of its spiritual destiny, otherwise God has no need of it.

تَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

Establish worship, pay the poor-due, and bow your heads with those who bow (in worship). (—II: 43)

وَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

Establish worship, and pay the poor-due, whatever of good ye send before you, ye will find it with Allah. Lo! Allah is Seer of what ye do. (—II: 110)

قُلْ أَجِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَئِثٌ فِيهِ وَلَا جُلَلٌ ﴿٣١﴾

(O Prophet!) Tell My bondmen who believe to establish worship and spend of that which We have given them, secretly and publicly, before the Day cometh wherein there will neither be any transaction nor friendship avail (anything). (—XIV: 31)

That is, on the Day of Reckoning, salvation will depend solely on one's good deeds, and if a person has not sent a provision of well-doing before him he will not be able to beg, buy or borrow it from anyone. Our endeavour should, therefore, be to make the best use of the life that has been granted to us, and, instead of wasting it in the pursuit of the carnal desires, collect as much provision for the Hereafter as possible through prayer, charity, fasting and other deeds of worship.

To refer now to some of the verses conveying the good tidings of Divine grace and love to the devout servants who are regular in worship.

وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ عَلَى مَا آتَاهُمُ وَالْبَاقِي الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

And give good tidings (O Mohammad) to the devout whose state is such that their hearts tremble when the name of Allah is mentioned, who are patient in whatever may befall them, and who establish worship and spend of what We have bestowed upon them (in Allah's way). (—XXII: 34-35)

وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً وَيَذَرُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ التَّيْبَةِ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٣٥﴾ جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٌ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ بَابٍ ﴿٣٦﴾ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٣٧﴾

Such as persevere in seeking their Lord's countenance, and are regular in prayer and spend of that which We bestow upon them secretly and openly, and overcome evil with good. Theirs will be the sequel of the heavenly Home—Gardens of Eden which they enter, along with all who do right of their fathers and their helpmates and their progeny. The angels will come out to receive them at every gate, (saying): Peace be unto you because ye persevered. Ah, passing sweet will be the sequel of the heavenly Home. (—XII: 22-24)

يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ ﴿٣٨﴾ رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ ﴿٣٩﴾ لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٤٠﴾

In these houses of worship they remember the Lord and offer praise to Him at morn and evening—men whom neither business nor any other occupation beguileth from remembrance of Allah and constancy in prayer and paying to the poor their due, who fear the Day when and eyeballs will be over-turned; that Allah may

reward them with the best of what they did, and increase reward for them of His bounty. Allah giveth blessings without stint to whom He will. (—XXIV: 36-38)

الْمُتَّقِينَ الْعَبِيدُونَ الْحَمِيدُونَ السَّائِحُونَ الزَّكِيُّونَ السَّجِدُونَ الْأَمْرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَالْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اللَّهِ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

(Triumphant) are those who turn repentant to Allah, those who serve Him, those who praise Him, those who fast, those who bow down, those who fall prostrate in worship, those who enjoin the right and forbid the wrong and those who keep the limits ordained by Allah. And (O Prophet!) give glad tidings to these believers. (—IX: 112)

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۝ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ۝ وَ
الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ ۝ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ ۝

Successful, indeed, are the believers who are humble in their prayers, and who shun vain conversation, and who are payers of the poor-due. (—XXIII: 1-4)

Later, after making a mention of their modesty, trustworthiness and other moral virtues, it is set forth that:

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ ۝ الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

These are the heirs who will inherit Paradise. There they will abide. (—XXIII: 10-11)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً
لَّنْ تَبُورَ ۝ لِيُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أُجُورَهُمْ يُزِيدُهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ

Those who read the Scripture of Allah, and establish worship, and spend of that which We have bestowed on them secretly and openly, they look forward to imperishable gain. He will repay them their wages and increase them of His grace. Verily, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (—XXXV: 29-30)

تَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ۝
فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Who forsake their beds (do not sleep in the night but devote themselves to prayer) and cry unto their Lord in fear and hope, and spend of what We have bestowed on them (in charity). No soul knoweth what is kept hidden for them of joy (in the Hereafter) as a reward of the good deeds they used to do. (—XXXII: 16-17)

كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ ۝ وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ ۝ وَفِي
أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ

They used to sleep but little of the night (and spent a larger part of it in prayer), and (after spending the night in such a manner) ere the dawning of each day would seek forgiveness, and in their wealth the beggar and the outcast had their full share. (—LI: 17-19)

إِنَّ السَّالِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ الْفَاضِلَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ
وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ
وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَالصَّالِحَاتِ وَرُؤُوسَهُمُ وَالْحَافِظِينَ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا
الَّذِينَ كَرِهَ اللَّهُ لِعَذَابِهِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَآجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Verily, men who surrender unto Allah and women who surrender, and men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth, and men who persevere in righteousness and women who persevere, and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their modesty and women who guard their modesty, and men who remember Allah much and women who remember—Allah hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward. (—XXXIII: 35)

These few verses are enough to indicate what paramount importance does the Quran attach to worship and how immensely beneficial is it for us to devote ourselves to it. At some places, the Prophet is exhorted directly not only to offer up worship, but to offer it up, also, in the highest degree.

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ ۝ وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ ۝

(So, O Mohammad) ! Sing the praises of thy Lord (and glorify Him), and be of those who make prostration unto (Him), and serve the Lord till the last moment of your life. (—XV: 98-99)

فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا ۖ وَمِنْ آنَاءِ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَىٰ

(O Mohammad) ! Bear with what they (the pagans) say and celebrate the praises of thy Lord ere the rising and the setting of the sun, and glorify Him in the hours of the night and at some parts of the day, that thou mayst find acceptance. (—XX: 130)

Since the main feature of *Namaz* is the glorification of the Lord and the celebration of His Praises, and no part of it—whether *Qayam*¹ or *Quyud*² or *Ruku*³ or *Sujood*⁴—is without it, at some places in the Quran the command to establish worship has been given by directing the people to magnify God and celebrate His praises. The object of the afore-mentioned verse, also, is to instruct the holy Prophet to keep up the practice of offering *Namaz* in the morning and in the evening and at various other parts of the day and night and to assure him that the fruits this prayerfulness of his will bear in this world, as in the next, will be such that they will make him happy.

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُ ۖ قُمْ إِلَيْكَ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ۖ رِصْفَهُ ۖ أَوِ انْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا ۖ أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ ۖ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا ۖ

O thou wrapped up in thy raiment ! keep up vigil the night long (i. e., devote the night to prayer), except a little (i. e., spend only a

1. Standing erect
2. The sitting posture
3. Bowing the head in reverence
4. The act of prostration with the forehead touching the ground

small part of it in sleeping), a half thereof (should be devoted to prayer), or a little more, or a little less than that, and recite the Quran, clearly and well. (—LXXIII: 1-4)

وَادْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا ۚ وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ لَدَىٰ بَيْتِكَ طَوِيلًا

Remember the name of the Lord at morn and evening, and worship Him during the night, and glorify Him in a larger part of it. (—LXXVI: 25-26)

These verses are, apparently, addressed only to the sacred Prophet but they are meant, in the second degree, for the entire body of his followers and all of them are advised to celebrate the praises of God and magnify Him during the various hours of the day and night.

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ ۖ فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ ۚ إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ ۚ

To these We have granted *Kausar*¹, the font (of abundance), therefore to thy Lord turn in prayer and sacrifice for he who hated thee will be cut off from future hope. (—CVIII)

In the foregoing verse it is clearly indicated that worship of God (prayer and sacrifice) leads to felicity and exaltation in this world also provided that it is genuine and not merely formal and ritualistic.

1. The word *Kausar*, literally, means abundance of good. In its larger interpretation it includes all the bounties of this world and the Hereafter God has bestowed upon the holy Prophet. The pond or stream of *Kausar*, mentioned in the Traditions in connection with the Day of Resurrection, are, also, covered by it.

CHAPTER X

LOVE AND SERVICE OF MANKIND

Love and service of fellow-men and respect for their rights is asserted by the Quran as vigorously as the bearing of true faith in God, the carrying out of His worship and the affirmation of undivided loyalty and allegiance to Him. The two things are often mentioned in it simultaneously and in such a way that it appears that love and service of mankind and respect for the rights of each other is among the basic tenets of Islam, like Monotheism and Divine worship.

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ

And serve Allah. Ascribe no thing as partner unto Him. Show kindness unto parents, and unto near kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and unto the neighbour who is not of kin, and the fellow-traveller, and the wayfarer, and (the slaves) whom your right hands possess. (—IV: 36)

In the above verse, the believers are called upon, side by side with the worship and glorification of God, to show kindness, first of all, to their parents, and, then, to other kinsmen, friends, neighbours and subordinates, and to all those who are weak, poor and needy.

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا لِيَاءَهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا
إِذَا بَلَغْنَ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا آيُت
وَلَا تَنْهَرُهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ۖ وَخَفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ
الدُّنَىٰ مِنَ الرُّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْنِي صَغِيرًا ۝

Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none save Him, and that ye show kindness to, parents whether one or both of them attain to old age with thee; and say not to them Fie, neither reproach

them: but to speak to them both with respectful speech; and defer humbly to them out of tenderness; and say, Lord! Have compassion on them both, even as they reared me when I was little. (—XVII: 23-24)

وَابِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالسَّيِّئِلَ وَلَا تُبْذِرْ مَالَكَ تَبْذِيرًا

Give the kinsman his due, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and squander not thy wealth in wantonness. (—XVII: 26)

فَابِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالسَّيِّئِلَ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

So give to the kinsman his due, and to the needy, and the wayfarer. That is the best for those who seek Allah's good pleasure. And such are they who are successful. (—XXX: 38)

Through these verses we are ordained to do our duty by the orphans and the travellers and such other weak and neglected members of the society who may be deserving of our help and sympathy. In some other verses, the prisoners, too, are included among them. Thus, in *Sura-i-Dahr*, we are told that the virtuous are those who "feed the needy and the prisoners", and it is they who will inherit the Garden of Paradise.

وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

And they feed the needy and the orphan, and the prisoner, for the love of Him. (—LXXVI: 8)

The Quran enjoins that an orphan should be treated with love and affection and were a helpless and needy person to approach for help, he should not be driven away.

فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ

Therefore, oppress not the orphan (do not treat him with cruelty or injustice), nor drive the beggar away. (—XCIII: 9-10)

It is worthy of note that no distinction is drawn between a Muslim and non-Muslim in the exhortation contained in the above verses about being kind and helpful to one's parents and other relatives and to the poor and down-trodden persons. If the parents or other kinsmen of a Muslim happen to be non-Muslims or a non-Muslim orphan or beggar or foreigner was to approach him for succour, the Quran lays down that he should also show kindness to them and try his best to remove their distress.

The Quran, in fact, goes to the extent of saying that should the parents of a Muslim be Polytheists and want him to renounce Islam and to return to their faith, he should continue to treat them well and be attentive to their needs.

وَإِنْ جَاهِدَا عَلَىٰ أَنْ تَتَّبِعَ فِي مَالِكَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا

If they strive to make thee join in worship with Me (Allah), things of which you have no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and thoughtful attention). (—XXXI: 15)

(I) WIVES AND CHILDREN

Next to the parents, a man is drawn most strongly towards his wife and children.

All of us want to keep our children in comfort, and we, often, go beyond our means in the eagerness to do so. It comes to us instinctively. The Quran, therefore, has preferred not to lay much stress on this aspect of our responsibility to our children. What we are, generally, inclined to neglect is their moral and religious education and upbringing. The Quran, accordingly, has taken special care to draw our attention to it and make it binding on us; as a matter of duty, to be as genuinely regardful of their spiritual welfare as a believer is expected to be of his own salvation.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا أَقْوَدُهَا النَّاسُ وَتُجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا
مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ٥

O ye who believe! Save yourselves and your families from the Fire of Hell whereof the fuel is men and stones, over which are set (for inflicting Punishment) angels, strong and severe, who disobey not Allah in that which He commandeth them, but carry out (dutifully) what they are commanded by Him to do. (—LXVI: 6)

Where the rights of the wives are involved, many of us are, sometimes, guilty of negligence and violation. Owing to it, the Quran has found it necessary to remind us, once and again, of our duty to treat them with loving kindness and be solicitous to their needs. It says:

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

And women have the same rights over men as men have over women in kindness and equity. (—II: 228)

وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

Live with your wives on a footing of kindness and equality. (—IV: 19)

In case the wives or children of anyone be a source of unhappiness to him because of their evil nature or irreligiousness or he may be apprehensive of harm or trouble from their side, the Quranic postulate for him is that while he should remain on his guard against their mischief, it would be better for him, as far as possible, not to retaliate or deal sternly with them, but to overlook and forgive. It will, God willing, also result in their correction and reform.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُمْ

O ye who believe! Among your wives and your children there are enemies of you, therefore beware of them. And if ye efface and overlook and forgive, then, verily, Allah is Forgiver, Merciful. (—LXIV: 14)

(ii) RIGHTS OF MANKIND IN GENERAL

We have just examined the Quranic teachings on the rights of parents, wives and children and other relatives and neighbours, orphans, travellers, and, so on. We will, now, see what our conduct should be towards mankind in general. The Quran declares the entire human race to be worthy of respect by proclaiming that all men are the children of the hallowed couple of Adam and Eve. Moreover, the special physical and mental faculties granted to man in comparison to other created beings and by virtue of which he is making use of the universe and putting it to his advantage are also regarded by it as a mark of Divine preferment for the whole of mankind.

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ

Verily, We have honoured the children of Adam and made them the masters of the land and the sea. (—XVII: 70)

Apart from the general declaration of the inherent superiority of the human race, the Quran enjoins specifically on its followers to speak gently and politely to all men, whosoever they may be.

وَكُونُوا لِلنَّاسِ خُلَفَاءً

And speak kindly to mankind. (—II: 83)

In the same way, all the believers are instructed to be just and compassionate towards everyone.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ

Lo! Allah enjoineeth justice and kindness (to one and all). (—XVI: 90)

وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْحَسَنِينَ

And do good (to everyone). Lo! Allah loveth those that are beneficent. (—II: 195)

Even in respect of those who are hostile or maliciously disposed towards us we are directed to be kind and considerate and return evil with good as far as possible.

وَلَا تَسْتَوِ الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ۚ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

The good deed and the evil deed are not alike (good deed is a virtue and evil deed is a sin). Return the evil deed with one which is better. (—XLI: 34)

ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ ۚ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ

Repay evil with that which is better. We are best aware of what they say against you. (—XXIII: 96)

The Quran, further, declares that the devout servants of the Lord who are forgiving and requite evil with good will be given a double reward.

أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُم مَّرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَيَدْرَءُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ

These will be given their reward twice over, because they are steadfast and repel evil with good. (—XXVIII: 54)

The spirit of the Quranic teachings can be appreciated from the fact that the holy Prophet himself was advised to be kind and forgiving to his enemies and to those who deceived him and played false by him.

وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَائِنَةٍ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ
فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْحَسَنِينَ

Thou wilt not cease to discover treachery from all save a few of them. But bear with them and pardon them. Verily, Allah loveth those that are kind. (—V: 13)

The general mandate of the Quran for the believers and Muslims is that they should be just and fair even to the bitterest of their enemies and allow not the hatred of anyone to prevent them from doing their duty by him.

وَلَا يَجْعَلْكُمْ شَنَّانًا قَوْمٌ عَلَىٰ آلَا تَعْدِلُوا ۖ إِعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ

And let not the hatred of others make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety. (—V: 8)

In conclusion, the Quran enjoins justice and compassion to everyone, including the enemy and the evil-intentioned, in the same way as it does the worship of God, the service of one's parents and other kinsmen and the showing of kindness to the weak, the indigent and other needy and depressed people.

(iii) SPECIAL RIGHTS OF MUSLIM BRETHREN

Like the ties of blood and relationship, the Quran declares Islam, also, to be a sacred spiritual bond which makes every

Muslim a Muslim's brother. It asserts :

اتِّمَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةً

The believers are naught else than brothers. (—XLIX : 10)

Flowing out of the common religious and spiritual bond are some special claims which Muslims have on one another. They are, for instance, required to be the friends and well-wishers of each other, there should be nothing but love and compassion among them and their mutual dealings should be marked with humility and goodwill.

رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ

They (the believers) are merciful among themselves. (—XLVIII : 29)

أُولَئِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

They are humble and self-abasing towards the believers. (—V : 54)

On the other hand, things that are inimical to the growth of good brotherly relations and can breed hostility and ill-will are strictly forbidden to Muslims. such as. to insult or defame anyone, to make fun of or be unduly suspicious towards other Muslims, to indulge in slander, back-biting and jealousy against one another and to pry into each-other's secrets.

Common as these weaknesses are among men, they are capable of casting an ugly shadow over the hearts and spoiling good relations. The Quran has, therefore, explicitly warned the Muslims against behaving towards each-other in that way.

رَبِّانِهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَخْفَوْنَ قُوَّةَ مَنْ قَوْمٍ عَلَى أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءً مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَلَى أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأَسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِمَّا قُذِّفَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَحِيمٌ

O ye who believe ! Let not men make fun of other men—it is quite possible that the latter may be better, in the sight of Allah, than the former—nor let women make fun of other women, who may happen to be better than them in the sight of Allah ; neither defame one another nor insult one another by nicknames. Bad is the name of lewdness after faith and those who do not (take heed even after these warnings had come to them) or turn in repentance such are the evil-doers.

O ye who believe ! Shun much suspicion ; for, surely, some suspicion is a crime. And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would anyone of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother ? You abhor that (so abhor back-biting) ! And keep your duty to Allah. Lo ! Allah is Relenting, Merciful. (—XLIX : 11-12)

Another outstanding feature of the guidance provided by the Quran on the mutual rights and duties of Muslims is that a Muslim is advised to include all the Muslim brethren in his prayers and supplications. That is one of the reasons why the plural number is used in most of the prayers taught by it to its followers, a few of which are given below :

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Our Lord ! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and defend us from the torment of the Fire. (—II : 201)

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَكَابُ

Our Lord ! Cause not our hearts to stray after Thou hast guided us, and bestow upon us Mercy from Thy Presence. Verily, Thou and no one but Thou art the Bestower. (—III : 8)

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَمْنَا وَغَفِرْنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقَدْ أَعَدَّ ابَ النَّارِ

Our Lord ! Lo ! we believe. So forgive us our sins and save us from the agony of the Fire. (—III : 16)

رَبِّهِ أَمَّا فَغَفِرْنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّحِيمِينَ

Our Lord ! We believe ; therefore, forgive us, and have mercy on us for Thou art the best of all who show mercy. (—XXIII : 109)

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ
فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَؤُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

Our Lord ! Forgive us and our brethren who came before us into the Faith, and leave not, in our hearts, rancour (or sense of injury) against those who believed. Our Lord ! Thou art, indeed, Full of Kindness, Most Merciful. (—LIX : 10)

CHAPTER XI

MORAL VIRTUES

Moral virtues and noble qualities of mind and character, also, occupy a place of crucial importance in the structure of Islamic teachings. The guidance furnished by the Quran in this respect is so perfect and well-balanced and integrated to the needs and urges of the human nature that if anyone were to act upon it and to discipline the moral aspect of his life according to the Quranic precepts, he would, doubtlessly, become an angel of mercy on the earth. An ideal specimen and proof of it was the life of the holy Prophet himself. We have it on the authority of his beloved wife, Hazrat Ayesha, that "the morals of the Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon whom) were exactly as taught by the Quran"

The teachings contained in the holy Quran on morality are so extensive that a whole volume can be written on them. We will, however, deal with them only briefly and under a few selected headings in these pages.

(i) FORTITUDE

Fortitude is a moral virtue of outstanding importance in the Quranic scheme of things. In our Urdu language, the term has come to be used in a very limited sense, implying only this much that when a calamity like death, disease or poverty may befall us we should endure it without a grumble, or in case we are harassed and put to loss or injury by a wicked person or an oppressor, we should not retaliate, but bear it patiently. But in the terminology of the Quran, its implications are much greater. To put it briefly, fortitude means to endure with courage and firmness any hardship, loss or suffering that may

come one's way in the pursuit of a noble cause or objective (like the earning of Divine good pleasure, the winning of the reward of the Hereafter, the propagation of virtue and eradication of vice, the rendering of service to the poor and the carrying of aid and relief to the needy), to remain steadfast in adversity, and to adhere unflinchingly to the path of truth and moral rectitude in times of trial and stress.

Keeping in mind the true significance of fortitude in Islam, read the following verses from the Quran.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا سَاعِدُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

O ye who believe! Seek help (in suffering and adversity) from perseverance and prayer. Allah, surely, is with those who patiently persevere. (—II : 153)

The meaning of "seeking help from perseverance" becomes clear from the verses of *Sura-i-Aaraf* in which it is stated that when it was decreed by the Pharaoh that all the sons of the Israelites should be slain and only their daughters spared, the following advice was given by Moses to his people :

اسْتَعِينُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ

Seek help in Allah and persevere. (That is, make up your minds to remain steadfast in truth and to uphold the faith with all your strength ; then see what Allah does). Lo ! the earth is Allah's (He is its real Owner). He giveth it for an inheritance to whom He will. (—VII : 128)

And the last verse of *Sura-i-Aal-i-Imran* reads :

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O ye who believe! Endure, outdo all others in endurance, be ready, and observe your duty to Allah, in order that ye may succeed. (—III : 200)

It often happens that when a man has to suffer repeated losses and setbacks, while remaining steadfast and pursuing with sincerity the path of faith and truth, and sees no reward of his labours and sacrifices, he begins to lose hope. For such occasions the counsel of the Quran is :

وَاصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And have patience, (O Mohammad), for, verily, Allah loseth not the wages of the good. (Sooner or latter they will surely get their full reward). (—XI : 115)

The same assurance is repeated in *Sura-i-Yusuf* in these words :

إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقْ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Surely, he who wardeth off evil and perseveres and remains steadfast (findeth favour) ; for, verily, Allah loseth not the wages of those who do good. (—XII : 90)

As the same time, the wealth of patience and perseverance is a Divine gift which can be attained only by the Grace of God.

وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا بِالْغَنَاءِ وَجْهَ رَبِّهِمْ

Endure thou patiently (O Mohammad), and remember that thine patience and fortitude (also) is only by the help of Allah. (—XVI : 127)

But, how is the help to be obtained? The Quran advises us, on the one hand, to draw upon the reserves of courage and determination granted to us by God and to resolve that we will bear the strokes of misfortune with fortitude and waver not from the path of Divine good pleasure however hard the circumstances may be, and, one the other, to pray to Him fervently to make it easy for us to be patient and persevering in adversity.

It is related in *Sura-i-Baqara* about a company of crusaders of the olden times that when it was attacked by the powerful hordes of Goliath, the faint-hearted gave way to despair and began to say that they could not stand up against such a ruthless enemy, but those in whom there was the strength of faith remained firm in their resolve and said that victory and defeat did not always depend upon material strength and instances were not unknown in history when, by the grace of Allah, a numerically inferior force had overcome a powerful foe.

كَمْ مِنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

How many a little company hath overcome a mighty host by Allah's leave! Allah is with the steadfast. (—II : 249)

The Quran tells that those devout men were not dismayed. They gathered up their courage and prayed to Allah for His help.

رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَوْامِرَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

And when they went to the field against Goliath and his hosts, they said: Our Lord! Bestow on us endurance, keep us steadfast, and give us help against the disbelieving folk. (—II : 250)

After mentioning this prayer, the Quran informs about the outcome of the battle in these words.

فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ

So they routed them by Allah's leave (II : 251)

The moral of the above parable is that the way to seek the help of God in terms of fortitude and constancy is that a person should, on his part, remain firm and steadfast in times of pain and peril, and, together with it, pray to God, with humility and earnestness, to favour him with His grace and endue him with

the celestial wealth of perseverance when he needed it most. God will help him with patience and steadfastness who will act in this way.

Though hints and suggestions of the rich recompense and happy sequel of those who patiently persevere are contained, along with the exhortations to be firm and patient in suffering and adversity, in some of the verses quoted above, we will take up a few verses dealing specifically with it.

In *Sura-i-Ra'ad* where a mention is made of those for whom Paradise has been laid out such people are particularly referred to who bear every kind of pain and suffering with courage and fortitude in the path of God.

وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

Such as persevere patiently (through trials and hardships) for the sake of seeking their Lord's good pleasure. (—XIII : 22)

And, further :

وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ بَابٍ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ

And there (in the Gardens of Eternity) the angels will come forward to receive them at every gate, saying: Peace be unto you because you persevered and remained steadfast. And, how sweet is the sequel of the heavenly Home. (—XIII : 23-24)

In *Sura-i-Aal-i-Imran*, patience has been given the leading place among the attributes of the inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ

The patient, and the truthful, and the obedient.....(—III : 17)

Similary, in *Sura-i-Ahzab*, where the good tidings of forgiveness and mercy are given to the devout servants of the Lord and their excellent moral qualities are called into notice, pointed reference is made to the virtue of fortitude.

وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ

And men who persevere, and women who persevere. (XXXIII : 35)

And, then, after the enumeration of a few more of their attributes, it is set forth that :

أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Allah hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward. (—XXXIII 35)

But, enough.

(ii) TRUTHFULNESS

Truthfulness, too, is one of the moral virtues on which the Quran places the greatest value.

A truthful person, according to the Quran, is not merely one who speaks the truth and does not utter a false word, but he should be truthful in heart and action as well. By truthfulness of the heart it is meant that a person should be free from all manner of deceit and hypocrisy, and by truthfulness of action, that there should be no contradiction between what he says and what he does. In other words, in thought, word and deed a truthful person should be equally honest and unvarying. The Quran, further, demands that a person should not only be truthful himself, but, also, keep company strictly with those that are so.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

O ye who believe! Fear God and be only with those that are true (in word and deed). (—IX : 119)

The significance of truthfulness is, again, brought out in *Sura-i-Baqara* in which it is explained that the righteous are those who believe in Allah, the Angels, and the Last Day, and in other transcendental truths, and, as a result of it, spend their wealth on the poor and the needy and keep their promises and are patient in tribulation and adversity and remain steadfast in faith in times of stress, and, then, the whole discussion is summed up in these two simple sentences :

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

Such are they who are truthful. Such are the God-fearing. (—II : 177)

In the same way, in *Sura-i-Hujurat*, it is set forth that :

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ

The (true) believers are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger and afterward doubt not, but strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah. Such are the truthful. (—XLIX : 15)

For the very reason that truthfulness includes truthfulness of heart and action as well, the term *Munafiqeen* (hypocrites) has been used in *Sura-i-Ahzab* as the antonym of *Sadiqueen* (truthful).

لَيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ الصَّادِقِينَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ وَيُعَذِّبُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ إِن شَاءَ

That Allah may reward the true men for their truth and punish the hypocrites if He will. (—XXXIII : 24)

It will be evident that those who, along with faith, are distinguished with the virtue of truthfulness are the ideal servants of the Lord and next in nobility and perfection only to the sacred Apostles. In the Quran where the four classes of believers are defined who are closest to the Lord and upon

whom there is His special favour and reward, those to be mentioned after the Apostles are the men who are truthful.

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالضَّالِّينَ
وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا

Whoso obeyeth Allah and the Messenger, they are with those unto whom Allah hath shown favour, of the Prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the righteous. The best of company are they. (-IV : 69)

The high value attached by the Quran to truthfulness can, also, be imagined from the fact that tribute has been paid in it to the memory of Prophet Abraham by saying that he was truthful.

وَإِذْ كُنَّا فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا

And make mention (O Mohammad) in the Scripture of Abraham. Verily, he was truthful, a Prophet. (-XIX : 41)

In the same Chapter, for Prophet Idrees (identified as Enoch), too, the same expression has been used, and the highest laudatory phrase employed for Hazrat Mariam (Mary), also, runs as follows: *The Mother of Christ, Mary was a truthful soul.* About Hazrat Yusuf (Joseph), again, it is related that in the prison the convict who was so deeply impressed by him that he had become his disciple used to address him as: *O Yusuf! The Most Truthful.*

What is more, the Quran asserts that truthfulness is a Divine Attribute by proclaiming that God is the Most Truthful.

وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ قِيلًا

Who is more true in statement than Allah? (-IV : 122)

وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَدِيثًا

Who can be truthful than Allah in utterance? (-IV : 87)

From the above, one can conclude for oneself what an immense reward will there be on this moral attribute from God. Yet, we will reproduce a few verses from the Quran bearing specifically upon it. We have, already, seen the verses from *Sura-i-Aal-i-Imran* in which fortitude and truthfulness have been given preference among the distinguishing qualities of the inheritors of Paradise.

الضَّالِّينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ

The patient, and the truthful, and obedient. (-III : 17)

In *Sura-i-Ahzab* where the tidings of Forgiveness and Paradise are given to believing men and women, the first attribute of theirs to find mention, after belief in God and Islam and loyalty to Him, is that they are truthful.

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ
وَالْقَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ

And men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth. (-XXXIII : 35)

These are, we are told, the blessed servants of the Lord for whom He has made the decision of Forgiveness and a huge reward.

لَعَلَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ قَفْزَةً وَاجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Allah hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward. (-XXXIII : 35)

Similarly, at the end of *Sura-i-Maida*, it is revealed in

connection with the Last Day that:

هَذَا يَوْمُ يَنْفَعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا
رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

That is the Day on which their truthfulness will profit the truthful, for theirs are the Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they are secure forever. Allah taking pleasure in them and they in Him. That is, indeed, a great triumph. (—V: 119)

(iii) FULFILLING PROMISES

It is a part of truthfulness that when a promise is made it should be fulfilled. In fact, the fulfilment of pledges and other engagements has been referred to as truthfulness at a number of places in the Quran.

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ

Of the believers are men who are true to that which they covenanted with Allah. (—XXXIII: 23)

In the above verse, the expression of being true to one's pledged word has been used to convey the idea of keeping it.

Be that as it may, the observance of one's promises and the carrying out of one's engagements is a special branch of truthfulness, but since in the Quran it has been enjoined as a virtue in its own right we have decided to deal with it separately.

Reads the Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ

O ye who believe! Fulfil your undertakings. (—V: 1).

وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا

And fulfil (every) engagement, for (every) engagement will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning). (—XVII: 34)

In addition to such forthright guidance and clear-cut commands, the Quran also seeks to foster the noble quality of keeping one's word among its followers by holding forth the assurance of Divine favour and grace and felicity in the Hereafter. Over and over again, does it emphasise that a special, distinguishing virtue of the bondmen of God is that they fulfil their undertakings.

وَالَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا

And (the righteous are) those who fulfil their engagement when they make one. (—II: 177)

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْتِنِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رِعُونَ

And who are the keepers of their pledge and their covenant. (—XXIII: 8)

With the same object the Quran, further, declares the fulfilment of promises to be one of the outstanding Attributes of the Almighty.

وَمَنْ أَوفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ

Who fulfileth his covenant better than Allah? (—IX: 111)

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ لَا يَخْلِفُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ

It is a promise of Allah, (and) Allah faileth not His promise. (—XXX: 6)

وَلَكِنْ يَخْلِفُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ

And Allah faileth not His promise. (—XXII: 47)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ

Verily, Allah faileth not to keep the covenant. (—XIII:31)

The purport of all these verses is that the fulfilment of promises is a Divine Attribute and God never fails to keep His covenants. We should also, therefore, remain true to our word and carry out our engagements faithfully.

(iv) TRUSTWORTHINESS

Closely related to truthfulness is the quality of trustworthiness. It is an important branch of the same. What trustworthiness denotes, in common parlance, is that if something is entrusted to us, or committed to our safe-keeping, we should be scrupulously honest about it and return it, intact and willingly, to the rightful owner when we are required to do so. But from the Quranic point of view, its meanings are much wider and the faithful discharge of one's duties and obligations and the showing of due regard to all the things that call for an upright and conscientious behaviour, also, fall within their range. In the light of those observations read the following verse of the Quran:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا

Allah doth command you to render back your Trusts to those to whom they are due. (—IV:58)

It is, thus, the duty of a Muslim that if a person deposited anything with him, or he held anything in trust, he should restore it honestly to whom it was due. In the same way, he ought to acquit himself conscientiously of all other obligations, whether monetary or otherwise, to the extent that if someone were to seek his advice about something, he should advise him sincerely and were the secret of anyone to come to his knowledge, he should treat it as a trust and desist from disclosing it to others.

The Quran also contains happy tidings of deliverance and Gardens of Paradise to those who are trustworthy and discharge their obligations honestly and faithfully. In the *Suras* of *Momineen* and *Ma'arij* it is laid down clearly that one of the lofty attributes of the dwellers Paradise is that they are the *shepherds of their trusts and covenants*.

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْتِنِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رِعُونَ

And those who are the shepherds of their trusts and their covenants. (—XXIII:8, and LXX:32)

The Quran, also, declares trustworthiness to be the attribute of the holy Apostles and of the Archangel, Gabriel. For instance, in *Sura-i-Shua'ra*, it is stated about a number of Apostles that they had made it clear to their people that:

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا عَمَلِي

Verily, I am a trustworthy Messenger unto you; so keep your duty to Allah, and obey me. (—XXVI:107-108; 125-26; 143-44; 162-63; 178-79)

And about Archangel Gabriel it is stated in the same *Sura* that:

نَزَّلَ بِهِ الرُّوحَ الْأَمِينُ

(The Quran is a revelation of the Lord of the Worlds) which the True Spirit (i.e. the chief trustworthy Angel, Gabriel), hath brought down. (—XXVI:193)

All said and done, such of us as are desirous of cultivating an affinity with the Apostles and the Angels and having a share in their excellent moral attributes should try their utmost to develop the quality of trustworthiness in themselves and fulfil their duties and obligations with due care and honesty.

(v) JUSTICE

Justice forms an essential part of Islamic ethics. It is, also, a branch of honesty and truthfulness. It means that we should be fair and honest in our dealings with everyone and do by him and say about him only what is just and true.

The entire fabric of our society is held together by the attribute of justice. A group or community which is lacking in it will, in the same measure, be denied the favour of the Lord, and in this world, too, its end will not be happy.

Indicative of the high importance attached by the Quran to justice is the verse reproduced below.

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ

We verily, sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Criterion, that men may conduct themselves with justice (towards each other). (—LVII: 25)

The word *Criterion* here signifies the commands and directives enjoining justice and equity. The purpose of the above verse is to indicate that God has revealed the edicts and injunctions of justice through His Apostles in the same way as He has sent down the Scriptures so that His bondmen may pursue the path of devotion, and fidelity and observe fairness and justice in their dealings with each other, individually as well as collectively. The manner in which the words *Criterion* and *Scripture* have occurred, one after the other, also goes to show what great stress is laid by the Quran on justice and fairplay in the economy of human affairs.

وَقُلْ أَمَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ

Say (O Mohamamad, to those Jews and Christians): I believe in whatever Scripture Allah hath sent down, and I am commanded

to be just among you. Allah is our Lord as well as your Lord. (—XLII: 15)

Mentioned in this verse, too, is the command to be just side by side with belief in the holy Scripture. And, in *Sura-i-Nahil*, where a number of important moral injunctions have been set forth for the believers, the first is that they should be just.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ

God commands justice and doing of good. (—XVI: 90)

It occurs, again, in *Sura-i-An'am*:

وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ

And when you are called upon to decide (in a dispute), do justice thereunto, even though it be against a kinsman. (—VI: 152)

And, in *Sura-i-Nissa*, it is stated in greater detail that the believers are enjoined to be firm and impartial in justice and to depose truthfully when they are called upon to do so even though it be against themselves or their parents or other relatives.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوِّمِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ
وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِنْ يَكُنْ غَيْرِيَا
لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أُولَىٰ بِهِمَا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا
وَإِنْ تَلَوْا أَوْ تَعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

O ye who believe! Be ye staunch in justice, and (truthful) witnesses for the sake of Allah, even though it be against yourselves or your parents or your kindred, whether the case be of a rich man or a poor man, for Allah is nearer unto both (than you are). So follow not your passion (or desire in the doing of justice), lest ye lapse from truth, and if ye lapse or fall away, then Allah is ever informed of what ye do. (—IV: 135)

How candid and comprehensive this verse is with regard to the doing of justice ! It commands us to adhere strictly to the path of justice and equity and to speak nothing but the truth when we may appear as a witness. We ought to stick to these principles as a matter of religious duty, however harmful or damaging it may turn out to be for ourselves or our friends and kinsmen. We should not be partial to anyone if we are called upon to judge or to depose in a dispute. We should not take the side of a rich man because of his riches or of a poor man because of his poverty (i. e., out of pity or compassion for him). Truth and justice must prevail over all other considerations, for God knows best. He is better aware of the hardships of the poor man than us. He is the true Friend and Protector of everyone. Moreover, we are called upon not to fight shy of adjudicating or testifying in a dispute for fear of incurring the displeasure of one or the other party for these things, also, are contrary to the spirit of justice and constitute a sin.

The Quran enjoins justice to those also—individuals as well as communities—who may be harbouring enmity or ill-will against us.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجِبُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَتَاءٌ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ الْآخَرِ أَنْ تَعْدُوا لَهُمْ أَعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ

And let not the hatred of others make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just; that is next to piety. (—V:8)

In the earlier verse it was laid down that affection or prejudice, or considerations of personal gain or loss, or of power and position of anyone, or the sentiments of compassion and sympathy for the underdog and the desire to be helpful to him must, in no case, be allowed to stand in the way of fairness and justice. Justice must be done and nothing but the truth must be spoken in all situations for that is the wish and command of the Lord. Now, in this last verse we are exhorted to be

just and fair even to the enemies of our life, property and faith. We are to judge honestly and impartially in respect of them, and to support them and decide in their favour if they are in the right, irrespective of their hatred or hostility.

(vi) GENEROSITY

Generosity, too, is a moral virtue of outstanding merit in the Quranic design of living. It means that a man should not keep the fruits of his wealth, power or other worldly attainments to himself, but share them, also, with his fellow-men. All the different forms of service to humanity are covered by it, such as the spending of wealth on the indigent and the needy, the rendering of assistance to others through one's knowledge and skill and the taking of pains for the sake of a fellow-man by carrying to him the help and succour he may be in need of. All these forms of service make the different branches of generosity, and the Quran by declaring it to be a fundamental virtue, calls upon its followers to practise it in all its aspects.

In the opening section of *Sura-i-Baqara* (which may be called introductory part of the Quran), it is stated that among the chief moral attributes of those who attain salvation by following its guidance, one is that they spend of what God has bestowed upon them on others for His sake.

وَمِمَّا زَكَّيْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

And who spend of that which We have bestowed upon them (on others), (—II:3)

The commentators of the Quran are agreed that the phrase *What We have bestowed upon them* in the above verse embraces, apart from wealth, all the other gifts of God as well, like strength, knowledge and skill which can be employed for the benefit of others. In the same Chapter of *Baqara*, again, it is explicitly set

forth that :

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعَ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةَ وَلَا شَفَاعَةَ

O ye who believe ! Spend of that wherewith We have provided you ere a day come when there will be no bargaining, nor friendship, nor intercession. (—II : 254)

And three sections later, while enjoining the expending of one's money, energy and other resources in the way of God, the assurance is given of a rich premium.

وَمَا تَنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَا يُنْفِقْهُمُ وَمَا تَنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُؤْتِكُمْ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ

And whatever good thing ye spend (on others), it is for yourselves, and this spending of yours should be for no other purpose than the seeking of Allah's good pleasure ; and whatever good thing ye spend, it will be repaid to you in full, and ye will not be wronged. (—II : 272)

And, further :

الَّذِينَ يَنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِالْإِيلِ وَالْقَهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Those who spend (for the sake of God, on others) their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, verily, their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them nor shall they grieve. (—II : 274)

Aside of the recompense in the Hereafter, the Quran says that those who spend their earnings in God's way are repaid most liberally by Him in this world, too, and thus, offers another inducement. It characterises such spending as a profitable undertaking from the material point of view also and compares it with agricultural farming in which a person reaps a hundred grains for each grain that he sows.

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَبْتَتَّ سَبْعَ سَنَاطِلٍ فِي كُلِّ سُكْبَلَةٍ وَفَاءَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضْعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

The likeness of those who spend their wealth in Allah's way is as the likeness of a grain which groweth seven ears and in every ear there are a hundred gains. Allah giveth increase (even greater than this) to whom He will. Allah is All-embracing. All-knowing. (—II : 261)

Furthermore, the Quran asserts that the money spent with the object of earning Divine pleasure is, in truth, a loan lent out to Him.

وَأَقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا

And lend unto Allah a goodly loan (i.e., the intent should be good and the thing given to others in God's way should also be good). (—LXXIII : 20)

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يَضْعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً

Who is it that will lend unto Allah a goodly loan so that Allah may repay it with an increase manifold ? (—II : 245)

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يَضْعِفَهُ لَهُ وَلَهُ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ

Who is he that will lend unto Allah a goodly loan, that He may double it for him and his may be a rich reward ? (—LVII : 11)

إِنْ تُقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يَضْعِفْ لَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ شَكُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

And if you lend unto Allah a goodly loan, He will double it for you and forgive you, for Allah is Responsive, Clement. (—LXIV : 17)

The allusion to the *goodly loan* is a gesture of Divine Grace

otherwise God is too Exalted and too Sublime to stand in need of such a thing. Is He not *Wealthier than the Worlds*?

Another teaching of the Quran in this connection is that what may be given in charity or spent on others for the sake of God should be good and worthwhile. It should not be that when an article has become useless and is no longer needed by the possessor, it is given away to the poor.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيهَا الْفَاسِقُونَ وَلَا تَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَكُمْ مِنْهُ حَسْرَةٌ ۖ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

O ye who believe! Spend of the good things (in the way of God) which ye have earned and of that which Allah brings forth from the earth for you, and do not intentionally spend the bad things from among them in charity—things which ye would not like to use for yourselves, and know that Allah is Absolute, Owner of Praise. (—II : 267)

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ وَمِمَّا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

You will not attain unto piety until ye spend of that which ye love; and whatever ye spend (whether good or bad), Allah is Aware thereof. (—III : 92)

The Quran demands that all acts of generosity should be motivated solely by the desire to seek the countenance of Allah and by no other consideration, such as that of fame or glory.

وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ

And ye spend not save in search of Allah's good pleasure. (—II : 272)

Thus, the hall-mark of the believers is that when they spend

on others or serve them in any other way it is wholly for seeking Allah's favour and nothing else.

And it is asserted in *Sura-i-Al-Leyl* that the devout servants of the Lord who spend their earnings on others for His sake, and as prescribed by Him, and there is no other desire or motive in their hearts, will attain His good pleasure and the Lord will save them, also, from the agony of the Fire.

وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الْكَافِرَ الَّذِي يُوْفِّي مَالَهُ يَتَزَلَّى ۚ وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ عِنْدَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تُجْزَى إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَى ۚ وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَى

Far removed from the flaming Fire will be the righteous who giveth his wealth that he may grow in goodness and hath in his heart no other favour or reward, except as seeking to fulfill the purpose of His Lord, Most High; he verily, will attain His favour. (XCII : 17-21)

Finally, it is necessary that no obligation is placed on the person to whom help is given nor are deeds of charity followed up with painful reminders thereof or reproach, or their virtue will be lost and they will avail us nothing in terms of Divine recompense.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى

O ye who believe! Render not vain your almsgiving by reproach and injury. (—II : 264)

(vii) SELF-DENIAL

A more refined form of generosity is that a person subordinated his own needs to the needs of others. It is this state of the mind which makes it easy for a man to give away from his provision to others while needing it himself and to endure pain and suffering willingly in order to bring solace and comfort to an unfortunate brother.

It is said in the Quran in the praise of the People of Medina that the fear of poverty or hardship did not deter them from placing all their worldly possessions at the disposal of the emigrants from Mecca.

وَيُؤْتُونَ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ

They prefer (the fugitive from Mecca) above themselves though (as a result of it) poverty may become their lot. (—LIX: 9)

In another verse, it is said of the blessed servants of the Lord and the inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven that :

وَيُصِغِرُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

They feed with food (they themselves relish) the needy, the orphan and the prisoner for the love of the Lord. (—LXXVI: 8)

(viii) STINGINESS

Reverse of liberality and high-mindedness, that is the vice which is in contrast to this virtue is parsimony and stinginess and the Quran has condemned it with the same force and emphasis with which it has commended the virtue of generosity.

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ بِمَا أَنعَمَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُمْ
بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَّهُمْ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخِلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ

And let not those who hoard up that which Allah hath bestowed upon them of His bounty (and do not spend it on others) think that it is better for them. Nay, it is worse for them. That which they hoard up will be hung round their necks on the Day of Resurrection. (—III: 180)

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبُخْلِهِمْ بَعْدَ آيِ الْإِيمَانِ يَوْمَ يُخْفَى
عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ خَافَتْ مَوَاجِدُهَا هَبْ حَافَةً هَذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ لَا تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا قَدْ قُلْتُمْ
أَنَّهُمْ كُنْتُمْ تُكْنِزُونَ

They who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah, unto them give tidings (O prophet) of a painful doom. On the Day

of Resurrection will all this (the hoarded wealth) be heated in the fire of Hell, and their foreheads and their flanks and their backs will be branded therewith (and it will be said unto them) : Here is that which ye hoarded for yourselves. Now taste of what ye used to hoard. (—IX: 34-35)

It would have been enough had there been only this verse in the Quran to warn against the painful consequences of the habit of miserliness. What more could be said by way of guarding men against the moral and spiritual course? May Allah endue our hearts with a living awareness of these truths and warnings.

(ix) CONTENTMENT

Like generosity, contentment, also, is one of the nobler qualities of man. The two, in fact, are intimately connected with one another.

By contentment it is meant that a person should be satisfied with what he earns through his toil and industry and from legitimate means. He should consider it to be his just share, and refrain from casting a covetous glance at the riches of others or stretching his palm before them. From the Quranic standpoint, everyone is a servant of the Lord and He, alone, is his Kind and Compassionate Nourisher and Sustainer. It is, therefore, not fitting and proper for him to look to anyone else for the fulfilment of his needs. There is no dearth or scarcity in the treasures of Allah and His Mercy is sufficient for one and all. Says the Quran :

أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِكَافٍ عَبْدَهُ

Is Allah not sufficient unto His slave? (Then why should he stretch his hand before anyone else?) (—XXXIX: 36)

وَلَا تَسْكُنْ عَيْنُكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَاهُ لَنُؤْتِيَهُنَّ

And cast not a greedy look towards that which We have caused some among them to enjoy. (—XX: 131)

وَلَا تَمْتُوا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ

And covet not the things in which Allah hath made some of you excel others. (—IV : 32)

This, in brief, is what contentment stands for according to the Quran.

(x) RELIANCE ON GOD

The fountainhead of contentment is *Tawakkul*, i. e., reliance on God. A person who has a complete faith in the Providential care of the Lord and is satisfied in his heart that He is sufficient for his needs will instinctively attain the highest degree of contentment. Along with it, trust in God is, in itself, an excellent spiritual attribute. He who is blessed with it habitually thinks and feels that God, and His Authority and Power, and Columns and Treasures are always with Him. The Quran has laid a great emphasis on the cultivation of this virtue by its followers. A few of its exhortations are given below.

إِنْ يَتَصَرَّكَ اللَّهُ فَلَا يَالِبَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ يَخْذُلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَنْصَرُّكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ
وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

If Allah is your helper none can overcome you, and if He withdraws His help from you, who is there who can help you? In Allah let the believers put their sole trust. (—III : 160)

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

Allah ! There is no God save Him. In Allah, therefore, let the believers put their trust. (—LXIV : 13)

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ

And trust thou in the Living One Who dieth not (while all the rest is perishable). (—XXV : 58)

وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ

And whosoever putteth his trust in Allah, He will suffice him. Lo ! Allah bringeth His command to fulfilment. (—LXV : 3)

(xi) HUMILITY

Humility is a most important virtue in the Quranic design of social and moral behaviour. It is the reverse of haughtiness and vainglory and denotes that a person should never think too highly of himself. He should regard himself a lowly servant of the Lord and practise meekness in his dealings with others.

Humility expresses itself through all the aspects of a man's personality, even in such minor things as his manner of walking, sitting, rising and speaking.

In the words of the Quran :

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا

And the servants of God, the Most Gracious, are those who walk on the earth in humility. (—XXV : 63)

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْبُقَاعَ طُولًا

And walk not on the earth with haughtiness. Verily, thou canst not tear up the earth nor canst thou stretch to the height of the Hills. (—XVII : 37)

The Quran relates about Prophet Luqman that while exhorting his son, he gave him this advice concerning humility.

وَلَا تَصِفْ غَدًا لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ
وَاقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاعْضَضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ

Turn not thy cheek in scorn toward folk (do not behave with vanity), nor walk with pertness on the earth ; verily, God loveth not the

braggart boaster. Be modest in thy bearing and subdue thy voice. Lo! the harshest of all voices is the voice of the ass. (—XXXI: 18-19)

The afore-mentioned verses contain a complete sermon on meekness. But, at some places, the Quran addresses itself directly to the holy Prophet and tells him to be meek and humble in order to emphasise that however great or distinguished a person may be, he should not give himself airs but behave with modesty towards his fellowmen.

وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Lower thy arms (in modesty) for the believers. (—XV: 88)

وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

And lower thy arms (in modesty) unto those believers who follow thee. (—XXVI: 215)

It is, also, evident from the two verses quoted above that meekness is to be shown only to the believers. They, alone, are worthy of it. In case of the unbelievers, the infidels and the heretics, if they are not at war with us or bent upon causing us harm or injury in any other way, our attitude towards them should be one of politeness and forbearance, and proper kindness and magnanimity should be shown to them, as the occasion may demand. But on account of their infidelity and polytheism, they are not deserving of meekness and modesty. To behave with them with humility will not be consistent with religious self-respect. Hence, the command to be modest is given in the Quran only in relation to those who believe.

(xi) VANITY AND SELF-CONCEIT

Vanity and self-conceit, as we have indicated already, is the very antithesis of modesty and humbleness. It is, therefore, as much repugnant to God as humility is pleasing to Him.

لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسْرُونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِينَ

Assuredly Allah knoweth that which they keep hidden and that which they make known. Lo! He loveth not the proud. (—XVI: 23)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا

Lo! Allah loveth not such as are proud and boastful. (—IV: 36)

Only those will find a place in the Gardens of Eternity who shun pride and are meek and humble.

بَلَدًا لَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ تَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا

As for that Abode of the Hereafter We assign unto them who seek not arrogance in the world, nor spread corruption. (—XXVIII: 83)

We, further, learn from the above verse, and it is also verified by experience, that the root cause of all mischief in the world is vanity and self-conceit.

Vanity, also, is the thing which, generally, holds back a person from the acceptance of truth. It is narrated about many a Prophet in the Quran that he was rejected by the leaders of his community merely out of pride and arrogance. Thus, of Pharaoh and his people it is stated that though when they saw the signs of Allah Moses had brought, they were satisfied in their hearts that those were truly from Him, and Moses, who had brought them, was His chosen Apostle, they declined to accept them on account of vanity and stuck to their paganish beliefs. In the end, they were visited by a dreadful punishment.

وَيَحَدِّثُهَا وَأُتَىٰهَا وَاسْتَفْتَتْهَا أَفْئِدَتُهُنَّ ظَنًّا وَعُلُوًّا فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

And they denied them, though their souls acknowledged them, for spite and arrogance. Then see the nature of the consequence for the wrong-doers. (—XXVII: 14)

And about another community of 'out-castes' who were condemned to the eternal chastisement of Hell it is narrated that the main cause of their misfortune, also, was haughtiness.

إِنَّمْ كَانُوا إِذْ أُقِيلَ لَهُمْ إِلَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ وَيَقُولُونَ
إِنَّا تَارِكُوا آلِهَتِنَا لِشَاعِرٍ مَجْنُونٍ

For when it was said to them: There is no God save One Allah, they were scornful (out of pride) and said: Shall we forsake our gods for a mad poet? (—XXXVII : 35-36)

The eternal damnation of the Devil, too, was due to his incorrigible arrogance. The Quran relates that when God bade the Devil to prostrate himself before Adam and the Devil refused to carry it out, God enquired from him:

مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ

What hindered thee that thou didst not fall prostrate when We bade thee? (—VII : 12)

And the Devil replied:

أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ

I am better than him. (—VII : 12)

In any case, it was pride which led the Devil to insubordination and revolt.

أَبَى وَتَكَبَّرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ

He (the Devil) demurred through pride, and so became a disbeliever. (—II : 34)

(xii) FORGIVENESS AND SELF-RESTRAINT

Forgiveness and self-restraint imply that the provocation offered by the other man and his mischief and viciousness should be borne with good grace and although we may be in a position to punish him for his wickedness, we should refrain from taking our revenge and be ready to forgive and forget his mean, stupid and hurtful acts. This, evidently, is a moral virtue of the highest order on which the Quran has laid due stress. It has been described by it as one of the special qualities of the devout servants of the Lord.

الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ فِي تَرَائِفِ الْفِتْرِ وَالْمَالِ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Those who spend of that which Allah hath given them, in ease and in adversity, in His way, and those who control their anger and are forgiving towards fellow-men. Allah loveth such good-doing servants. (—III : 134)

In *Sura-i-Shura* while it is acknowledged that everyone is legally entitled to have due revenge of a wrong or injury done to him, it is pointed out that a more honourable and praiseworthy course would be that he bore it with patience and forgave.

وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

And, verily, whosoever is patient and forgiveth. Lo! that, verily, is an act of courage and high-mindedness. (—XLII : 43)

In the same chapter, a few verses earlier, it is set forth that an exceptional quality of the believers on whom there will the special favour of the Lord on the Day of judgement is that they suppress their anger and are forgiving.

وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ يَغْفِرُونَ

When they are aroused (over some affront or injury) in anger, they forgive. (—XLII : 37)

In *Sura-i-Noor*, people are exhorted to be patient and forgiving in these fascinating words :

وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Let (the believers) forgive and show indulgence (to those who transgress against them). Do you not yearn that Allah may forgive you! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (—XXIV : 22)

Anyone who wants kindness and indulgence to be shown to him by God should himself be ready to forgive those who sin against him. God will, also, then be forgiving and merciful towards him and the Divine Mercy and Forgiveness will, naturally, be in keeping with His High Splendour and Glory. Another aspect of the uplifting incentive contained in the above verse is that God proclaims about the course of conduct He is prescribing for His slaves that it is His own practice as well, and this is what He Himself does towards his erring servants. Since God is Benevolent and Merciful to His defaulting slaves, His slaves, too, should be indulgent and forgiving towards their transgressing brethren and, thus, forge a qualitative closeness and identity with Him.

وَأِنْ تَعَفَّوْا وَتَصْفَحُوا وَتَغْفِرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

And if ye forbear, and overlook, and forgive, then Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (—LXIV : 14)

These verses were of a general character. Now, read one which is addressed directly to the sacred Prophet.

حُذِرَ الْعَفْوُ وَأُمِرَ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ

Keep to forgiveness (O Mohammad), and enjoin kindness and bear patiently with the ignorant. (—VII : 199)

Here are two more in the praise of those who show

forgiveness to their opponents and enemies.

وَإِذَا سَبَّحُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا
وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا تَبْتَغِ الْجَاهِلِينَ

(Those will be given their reward twice over) who when they hear an evil talk (from the wicked and the ignorant) they withdraw from it and say : Unto us are our works and unto you are your works, Peace be unto you! We desire not to have an argument with the ignorant. (—XXVIII : 55)

إِذَا خَلَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامٌ

(The faithful slaves of the Beneficent are they who) when the foolish talk to them they do not enter into an argument with them) but say : Peace! (—XXV : 63)

It is worthy of note that the Quranic teachings on forgiveness and self-restraint we have discussed here were related only to personal sphere. If someone did a wrong to us, or sinned against us in any other way, in the matter of our individual rights or interests, it would be best for us to forgive. The Quran expects us to do so. But should a person or community seek to spread mischief and corruption on the earth, or to pervert its social or moral climate, by flagrantly violating the limits laid down by God, our duty would lie in dealing firmly with him or it. To show compassion and forgiveness to such a person or group would amount to a betrayal of humanity. It would be an act of infringement against the Divine Law. The Quran, therefore, calls upon us to put down all such movements, persons or activities with a heavy hand and when it enjoins that the wrong-doers and mischief-mongers ought to be dealt with sternly it is, manifestly, in respect of these situations and circumstances. This distinction must be borne in mind while studying the guidance of the Quran on what our attitude should be towards the evil-doers and transgressors.

(xiii) COURAGE

Side by side with its teachings on meekness, humility and tolerance, the Quran, also, sets great store by the qualities of boldness, courage and determination and the display and employment of force and firmness on the proper occasion. For instance, when faith or justice be at stake, or there may ensue a war between truth and falsehood, the Quran enjoins upon its followers not to shirk their duty but give the fullest proof of gallantry and steadfastness in the defence of what they cherish.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوا

O ye who believe ! When ye meet those who disbelieve in battle, turn not your backs to them. (—VIII : 15)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ صَفًّا كَأَنَّهُمْ بُنْيَانٌ مَرْصُومٌ

Lo ! Allah loveth those who battle for His cause in ranks, as if they were a wall of granite (or a solid structure). (—LXI : 4)

In another Chapter the courage and religious enthusiasm of the Companions of the holy Prophet have been alluded to in glowing terms who refused to be discouraged when, with a view to frighten them, they were told that the enemy had made enormous preparations against them and collected a huge quantity of arms. On the contrary, these reports only helped to steel their hearts and intensify their religious spirit and they declared that they would see what came ; God was sufficient for them.

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا لَمْ يَأْتِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ لِّلْإِنْسَانِ وَقَدْ جُمِعُوا لَكُم فَاجْتَنِبُوا
فَلَا تَهَمُّوا إِنَّمَا تَأْتُوا اللَّهَ وَرَبَّهُمُ الْوَكِيلَ

Those unto whom men said : Lo ! the people have gathered against you and made great preparations for your destruction : Therefore, fear

them, but the threat of the danger only increased the faith of them and they cried : Allah is sufficient for us. Most Excellent is He unto whom we put our trust. (—III : 173)

In the same way, the unparalleled heroism and religious fervour displayed by the believers in the Battle of Ahzab against an enemy, a hundred times stronger, has been commended in these words :

وَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ كَالْأَحْزَابِ مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيْمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا

And when the true believers saw the clans of the enemy, they said : This is that which Allah and His Messenger promised us. Allah and His Messenger are true. It did but confirm them in their faith and resoluteness. (—XXXIII : 22)

In the final analysis, it is the fear of death or some other loss or injury which makes a man a coward. There is no greater impediment to courage than this. The Quran, as such, has taken good care to set it at nought by asserting that the time of death is fixed : if one's appointed hour has come, no one can avert it, and if it has not, no one can bring it nearer. It cannot be altered even by the fraction of a second. Likewise, whether a disaster overtakes us or not is dependent solely on the Will of God. No misfortune can touch us, or be warded off except by Allah's leave. It is all in His Hands. There can be no running away from what He has decreed.

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَمُوتَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ كَيْتَابٌ مُّؤْتَىٰ

No soul can ever die except by Allah's leave and at a term appointed. (—III : 145)

وَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِرُونَ

When the appointed time (of their death) cometh, then they cannot put it off an hour, nor hasten it. (X : 49)

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ

No calamity befalleth (anyone) save by Allah's leave. (—LXIV: 11)

قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

Say (O Mohammad): Naught befalleth us save that which Allah hath decreed for us. He is our Protecting Friend. In Allah let believers put their trust. (—IX: 51)

Can there be any room for timidity or cowardice in the hearts into which these truths have made their way?

(xiv) DIGNITY AND SELF-RESPECT

Allied to courage is the sense of dignity and self-respect. The Quran wants its followers to be self-respecting and avoid things that may degrade them in the eyes of others. As for example, its advice to them is that they should refrain from disclosing their state, as far as possible, to others even if they may be forced by poverty to starvation. Of such persons it says:

يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ الْبَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءُ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ

The unthinking will account them well-to-do because of their restraint. Thou shalt know them by the expression on their faces. (—II: 273)

Further, a distinctive quality of the chosen servants of the Lord has been said to be that they conduct themselves with dignity in situations that are lacking in decency and refinement.

وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِالْغُفْمِ وَأَكْرَامًا

And when they pass near disgraceful things, they pass by with dignity. (—XXV: 72)

In fine, the advice of the Quran to the believers is that they should always act up to a standard of worthy conduct.

(xv) MODESTY

Modesty is another virtue which the Quran prescribes to its followers. As a logical corollary to it, they are enjoined to shun the opposite habits of shamelessness and perversity (for which it uses the comprehensive term of *Fahisha* or *Fuhasha*, meaning lewdness). In fact, lewdness and immodesty are often given the leading place in the Quran among the things that are forbidden to the believers as in the undermentioned verse of *Sura-i-Nahl* which in spite of its brevity is regarded to be a self-contained directive on morality (and for which reason is generally recited at the end of the sermon at the Friday congregational prayers). It is, first, set forth in this verse that Allah enjoineeth justice and kindness and charity and generosity, and, then, it is added:

وَيَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ قَا

He forbiddeth lewdness and abomination and wickedness. He exhorteth you so that ye may take heed. (—XVI: 90)

Likewise, in *Sura-i-A'iraf*, where the things that are fundamentally prohibited to Muslims are mentioned, lewdness has received the foremost notice.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُكُونُوا بِلَهُ اللَّهِ مَالَهُ يَتَكَلَّمُ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

(O Prophet) say: My Allah forbiddeth all lewdness and indecencies, apparent as well as hidden (i.e., whether performed openly or secretly), and sin and wrongful oppression, and that ye associate with Allah that for which no warrant hath been revealed, and that ye tell concerning Allah that which ye know not. (—VII: 33)

The prohibition of lewdness and immodesty in these and other verses is actually another way of sanctioning and enjoining modesty and purity.

The Quran, also, disallows deeds, customs and practices which though, in themselves, do not constitute lewdness, are capable of leading upto it. As for instance, it requires that when men and women who are not intimately related to one another happen to be together, they should lower their gaze and not look at each other directly.

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا أَرْوَاحَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَنْ يُعَذِّبَ اللَّهُ خَيْرَ بَأْسٍ يَصْنَعُونَ
وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ

(O Prophet)! Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (in the company of women who are not closely related to them) and be modest. That is purer for them. Verily, Allah is Aware of what they do. And tell believing women to lower their gaze (in the company of men who are not closely related to them) and be modest. (—XXIV : 30-31)

From the wording of afore-mentioned verses it is clear that the restriction on the eyes has been placed solely for the promotion of modesty. The same is the object behind all the injunctions concerning purdah.

In *Sura-i-Ahzab*, the believers are advised that if they have to ask for anything from the holy Prophet's wives, they should do so from behind a curtain and the wisdom of it is explained in these words:

ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَنْ يُقَالُوا لَهُمْ قُلُوبُهُمْ

It is purer for your hearts and for their hearts¹. (—XXXIII : 53)

In the same Chapter it is explicitly mentioned about men

1. Although this verse is in respect of the Prophet's wives, its application is general.

and women to whom joyful tidings of Forgiveness and a vast Reward are given that they guarded their modesty.

وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظِينَ الذِّكْرَ كَثِيرًا وَالَّذِينَ كَرِهَ اللَّهُ لِعُهُم مَغْفِرَةً
وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

And men who guard their modesty and women who guard their modesty, and men who remember Allah much and women who remember Allah much—for them Allah hath prepared forgiveness and a vast reward. (—XXXIII : 35)

In the same context, in the *Suras of Mominoon* and *Ma'arij*, we read:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَرْوَاحِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ

And those who preserve their chastity, (these will dwell in Gardens, honoured). (—XXIII : 5 and LXX : 29)

In conclusion, modesty is among the moral virtues with which the question of salvation is closely related.

(xvi) CLEANLINESS

The Quran makes it religiously binding upon its followers, as a part of its teachings on good manners and noble qualities, to observe cleanliness and keep themselves free from filth and squalor.

لِيَبْلُوكَ نَظْفَهُمْ وَرُحْمَهُمْ

And keep they rainment clean and shun all filth and pollution. (—LXXIV : 4-5)

وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ النَّظْفَرِينَ

Allah loveth those who are neat and clean and take good care of it. (—IX : 108)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

Truly, Allah loveth those who turn unto Him, and loveth those who care for cleanness. (—II : 222)

Cleanliness, thus, makes a man worthy of the love of God.

Our Lord! Make us among those who repent, and among those who care for cleanliness!

CHAPTER XII

MONETARY AFFAIRS

In the guidance furnished by the Quran to its followers for the purification of human life and the evolution of a sound moral character an important stipulation is that they should be truthful and upright in their business and other monetary dealings and earn their livelihood by fair and honest means.

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ

And eat up not each other's property by unclean and dishonest means. (—II : 188)

بِأَيْهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ وَمَعْلَمَةٍ

And eat up not each other's property by unfair and dishonest means. Of course, there is no harm in it that there be trade among you by mutual consent. (—IV : 29)

Both of these verses are of such a sweeping character that all the corrupt and unlawful means of making money, whether traditional or modern, such as, usury, cheating, graft, embezzlement, dishonest trading, gambling, speculation and lottery are covered by them and disallowed in their entirety to the believers. Then, there are verses which deal specifically with vices like bribery and usury. In the 38th Section of Sura-i-Baqara, for instance, it is laid down that Allah has forbidden usury to those who believe, and, then, there occurs the phrase that Allah hath blighted usury with the manifest object of proclaiming how hateful

the practice is with Him, and, finally, it is stated that if people still do not give it up, after these emphatic admonitions have come down to them from Above, they should know that *they are at war with Allah and His Messenger.*

Similarly, wine and gambling which, along with other wretched social and monetary habits and practices, had become a part of the life of Arabs in those days, have been denounced in such strong terms in *Sura-i-Maida*:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْأَنصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ
رِجْسٌ مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O ye who believe! Strong drink and games of chance and these installations (i.e., the installations of the idols and the offerings made thereon) and divining arrows are only an infamy of the Satan's handiwork. Leave it aside that ye may succeed. (-V:90)

Cheating in weighment is a most common kind of fraud in business. The Quran has the following to say in its codemnation.

وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كَلَّمْتُمْ وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ

Fill the measure correctly when ye measure and weigh with a right balance. (-XVII:35)

وَأَقِيمُوا الزُّنْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ

Observe the measure strictly, and never fall short thereof. (-LV:9)

Apart from these straightforward exhortations, a severe warning of punishment in the Hereafter is given to the traders

who deal in fraud and cheat in weighment.

وَيْنُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ إِذَا كَانُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ۖ وَإِذَا كَانُوا لَهُمْ أَوْذَىٰ وَهُمْ يُخِيفُونَ ۚ أَلَمْ يَظُنُّ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنَّهُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ ۖ لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ۚ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Woe to those that deal in fraud,—those who when they have to receive in measure from men, exact full measure, but when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due. Do they not think that they will be called to account on a Mighty Day when all mankind will stand before the Lord of the Worlds? (-LXXXIII: 1-6)

No one who sincerely believes in the Quran will think of cheating in weighment after he had come to know of these verses. If men are still found among believers who are guilty of it, it should be clear that there is no real faith in them.

A most repulsive form of living on the wages of iniquity is that a person should extort money and other gifts from the simple-minded servants of the Lord by posing before them as a religious leader or a spiritual guide. These worthless imposters take good care to keep their victims ignorant of the true teachings of the faith and make them stay away from the company of earnest men of God and genuine religious preachers so that the channels of income remained open not only for themselves but for their future generations as well. During the days of the holy Prophet such cheats and deceivers were found mostly among the Jews. But, in our time, unfortunately, a whole class of professional traders in godliness and spirituality has developed among the Muslims. Anyway, whether such persons belong to the Jewish, Christian or Muslim community, the Quran is emphatic in its denunciation of them. It says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا هَٰؤُلَاءِ فَسَيَمْلِكُوا عَلَيْكُمْ كَيْدًا وَإِغْوًا ۚ إِنَّهُمْ قُلُوبُ غَافِلُونَ ۚ وَيَصْلَحُونَ عَنْ سَمْعِهِمْ

O ye who believe! Many of the rabbis and the monks devour the

wealth of mankind wantonly and (instead of guiding men to the straight path), debar them from the path of Allah. (—IX: 34)

Among the Jews, at the time of the holy Prophet, there were theological scholars who were fully aware of the texts contained in the earlier Scriptures prophesising the Apostleship of the Prophet, and confirming the truth of the religion and the holy law brought into the world by him, yet they did not reveal them to their people. They concealed or distorted those revelations solely for the purpose that their hold on the credulous masses did not relax and they continued to exploit them for personal gain. A stringent warning was administered to such concealers of truth in *Sura-i-Baqara*.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيُسَوِّغُونَ لَهُ سَائِلَاتٍ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ
فِي نَفْسِهِمْ إِلَّا لَئِنْ رَأَوْا بَٰرَكَ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

Lo! Those who hide aught of the Scripture which Allah hath revealed, and purchase a small gain (in the shape of gifts and offerings) therewith, they eat into their bellies nothing else but fire (they pretend to be men of God in order to cheat the simple-minded people, but the truth is that God is extremely displeased with them). Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He absolve them of their sins (through Forgiveness). Theirs will be a painful doom. (—II: 174)

While, on the one hand, the Quran condemns all unfair means of earning one's livelihood as wicked and sinful and warns strictly against the partaking of forbidden articles of food and drink, on the other, it encourages its followers to enjoy all good and lawful food and engage freely in the legitimate ways of making a living (whose scope is very wide) and to render thanks to Allah for them and refrain from putting themselves to unnecessary hardship.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ

O ye believe! Eat of the good things with which We have provided

you, and render thanks to Allah if it is really He whom ye worship. (—II: 172)

فَكُلُوا وَمِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا ۚ وَاشْكُرُوا لِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ

So eat good and lawful food which Allah hath provided for you and thank the bounty of the Lord if it is Him ye serve. (—XVI: 114)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَحْزَمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ
الْمُعْتَدِينَ ۝ وَكُلُوا وَمِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنتُم بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ

O ye who believe! Forbid not the good things which Allah hath made lawful for you, and transgress not. Lo! Allah loveth not transgressors. Eat of that which Allah hath bestowed on you as food good and lawful, and keep your duty to Allah in Whom ye are believers. (—V: 87-88)

CHAPTER XIII

PREACHING AND PROPAGATION

All reasonable men will agree that the Quranic teachings on faith, action, morality, and, so on, are the teachings of truth and virtue. The Quran calls upon its followers not only to observe them, but also to participate in the glorious task of their preaching and propagation. Or, in other words, it wants them, also, to strive earnestly and to the best of their ability for the noble objective of persuading and enabling more and more of his fellowmen to attain the good pleasure of the Lord and the Gardens of Eternity by following faithfully the path of faith and righteousness.

There are many forms and grades of this endeavour depending on one's means and circumstances, such as, the preaching of faith, the sanctioning of what is right and the forbidding of what is wrong, and the taking up of arms in the cause of God. The present writer has dealt with the subject fully in an earlier book entitled, *Islamic Faith And Practice*. Here his aim is simply to indicate what the Quran expects of us in that regard. To begin with the following verse from *Sura-i-Aal-i-Imran*.

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong; they are the one who will attain felicity. (—III: 104)

From the word, *Minkum* (meaning, out of you), in the above verse, one may conclude that the task ordained in it is applicable not to the whole of the *Ummat* believing in the Quran, but only to a section of it. But the last phrase of this very verse: *they are the one who will attain felicity* should be enough to dispel any such misunderstanding for it proclaims

that only those people will attain success and salvation who observe this duty and a matter of such vital importance on which should depend the question of deliverance in the Hereafter cannot, obviously, be made the concern of a particular class or section alone. Reason and justice both would demand that such a call encompassed the whole community of believers. Moreover, four or five verses later, it has been said in the same *Sura* that :

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

O followers of Mohammad! Ye are the best community that hath been raised up for mankind. Ye enjoin right conduct and forbid evil; and ye believe in Allah. (—III: 110)

The very object of the raising up of the Muslims, thus, is that in addition to bearing faith in God, they have to discharge the duty of prescribing right conduct and forbidding evil through moral and spiritual guidance and instruction. Such being the case, the responsibility for the carrying out of this obligation does not rest with any individual section of the Ummat, but with the whole of it. However, the nature of this sacred mission is such that, generally, it is not necessary for every member of the community to take a hand in it. If people with the right aptitude and ability actively devote themselves to it, according to their conditions and resources, and the cooperation of the rest of the Ummat is available to them, the work goes on and some headway is consistently made. In the humble opinion of this writer, the words, *out of you*, have been preferred in the afore-mentioned verse solely for this reason.

We proceed, now, to take up another verse which reads :

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا
وَقَالَ إِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Who is better in speech than one who calls men to God, works righteousness, and says, I am of those who bow in Islam! (XLI: 33)

The most pleasing thing with God, we are told, is that along with believing in God and practising moral uprightness, one should invite the other servants of the Lord also to it and participate in the holy cause of moral and religious instruction and uplift of mankind as a whole.

وَالْعَصْرُ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ خَيْرٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَّصَّوْا بِالْحَقِّ
وَتَوَّصَّوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

By the token of Time (through the Ages), verily, Man is in loss except such as have Faith and do righteous deeds, and exhort one another to Patience and Constancy. (CIII: 1-3)

In the above-quoted Chapter of the Quran, the exhorting of one another to Truth and Patience and Constancy is, also, prescribed, in addition to bearing faith in God and doing good works, for the attainment of success. Exhorting one another to Truth, evidently, means that in faith, morality and mutual dealings (whether these are of an individual or collective nature and involve one's own kith and kin or others), that is, in all the fields of personal and social existence, people should join together in the mutual teaching and practise of truth, while the stipulation of exhorting one another to Patience and Constancy implies that they should consistently seek to advise and instruct each other to overcome their baser desires and instincts and remain faithful to the tenets of Faith and right guidance. In fine, the verse demands that, like belief and righteous conduct, moral and spiritual reform and instruction, too, is included among the fundamental obligations of those who believe.

A broader and more important branch of this endeavour is *Jihad*, which means striving to the utmost in the cause of God. In other words, it denotes that a believer should spare himself nothing by way of time, money or life that may be needed and lie within his power for the moral and spiritual redemption of fellowmen. This is what *Jihad* signifies, in a nutshell. Its form, as we have seen earlier, can vary from time to time and place to

place. The manner in which the sacred Prophet carried on his lofty struggle during the twelve or thirteen years of his Ministry in Mecca was a form of *Jihad*, and so, also, were the soul-stirring endeavours made by him and his Companions and hardships and privations they bore in the cause of God and His faith during the earlier years of their stay in Medina, and the battles like those of Badr and Uhud the Prophet had to fight in the course of the fulfilment of his Divine mission.

Hence, wherever the duty of *Jihad* has been imposed by the Quran it means nothing more or less than that a believer should not be grudging of whatever effort or sacrifice he can make for the elevation of men around him into devout and faithful servants of the Lord and for delivering them from the bondage of false deities to His sole bondage and rendering them worthy of Divine Benevolence and Graciousness and of the Gardens of Paradise by cleansing and purifying their lives and bringing light to their souls. The Quran attaches such an overwhelming importance to this task it has alluded to it in the glorious terms of *Help of God* and those who take part in it are eulogised as the *Helpers of God*, and promised felicity and a vast reward in both the present world and the Hereafter.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيكُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ۚ تُوَفُّونَ بِاللِّقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ
وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۚ يَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ
ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلُكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَمَسْكِنٌ طَيِّبٌ فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَذْيٍ ذَٰلِكَ
الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ۚ وَآخَرَىٰ تُحِبُّونَهَا نَصْرٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَقِيَّةٌ قَرِيبٌ ۚ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا كُونُوا أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِمُؤْمَرِيهِ مِنَ الْمَوَارِثِينَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَالَ لِمَنْ
كُنْتُمْ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ

O ye who believe! Shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous Penalty? (It is) that ye believe in God and His Apostle, and that ye strive your utmost in the cause of God with your property and your persons: that will be best for you if ye but knew. He will forgive ye your sins, and admit you to Gardens beneath which rivers flow and in beautiful mansions in Gardens of

Eternity: that is indeed, the Supreme Achievement. And another favour will He bestow which ye do love—Help from God and a speedy victory. So give the Glad Tidings to the believers. O ye who believe! Who will be my helpers to the work of God, as said Jesus, the Son of Mary: Who will be my helpers to the work of God? Said the disciples: We are God's helpers! (—LXI: 10-14)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O ye who believe! Do your duty to Allah, and seek the means of approach to Him (the most desirable among which is that ye) strive with might and main in His cause in order that ye may prosper. (—V: 35)

وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ ۚ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ ۚ
وَمِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۚ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَٰذَا لِيََكُونَ الرَّسُولُ
شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شَهِدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ ۚ

And strive in His cause as ye are to strive, (with sincerity and discipline). O followers of Mohammad! Allah has chosen you, and, has imposed no difficulties on you in religion: it is the cult of your father Abraham. It is He who has named you Muslims both before and in this revelation; that the Apostle may be witness for you, and ye may be witness for mankind. (XXII: 78)

In *Sura-i-Hujurat*, *Jihad*, that is, exertion and sacrifice in the cause of Divine religion, has been described as a prerequisite of faith. It says that true believers are only those who believe, wholly and sincerely, in God and the Prophet and in the Divine Guidance and are ready to strive to the utmost in His way.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ
اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ ۚ

The true believers are those only who believe in Allah and His Messenger, and afterward doubt not, and strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah. Such are the sincere. (—XLIX: 15)

And it is stressed in *Sura-i-Tauba* that the outstanding quality of the believers is that the love of God and the Prophet and the passion for service and sacrifice in the cause of Faith is stronger in their hearts than devotion to the most precious things or persons in the world including their own lives and parents and wives and children and wealth and trade. Those who do not come up to this standard are not worthy of Divine Grace and Mercy. For them there is in store a severe Punishment.

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا
وَبِيعَارٌ تُمَنُّونَ كَسَانَهَا وَمَسْكِنٌ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَبِيعَارٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ
فَعَلَّيْكُمْ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُهُ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

Say : If your fathers, and your sons, and your brethren, and your wives, and your tribe, and the wealth ye have acquired, and the merchandise for which ye fear that there will be no sale, and the dwellings that ye desire are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way : then wait till Allah bringeth His command to pass. Allah guideth not the disobedient. (—IX : 24)

We learn from the above verse that a believer should not only make this noble task his own, but also hold it dearest to his heart for it is through the power of love that the trials and difficulties that beset the path of those who dedicate themselves to it are overcome.

CHAPTER XIV

SERMONS OF THE QURAN

In a way, the whole of the Quran is a sermon. The hundreds of verses we have quoted under different headings in the foregoing pages were mainly composed of some exhortation or another. But there are numerous other passages which, too, are exclusively in the nature of an advice or admonition, and we have, further, not yet dealt with them. We, therefore, purpose to bring our narrative to an end with a collection of some of them in ten separate sections and in accordance with the arrangement followed in the holy Quran.

(i) Seeking of help from patience and prayer in times of stress and adversity

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّخِذُوا بِالْصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ۝ وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتٌ بَلْ أَمْوَاتٌ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ۝ وَلَتَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بَعْضٌ مِّنَ الْغَوَىٰ وَالْجَمْعِ
وَتَقْصِرَ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالْمَتَرِ وَالْمَتَرِ وَالْمَتَرِ ۝ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ
قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ۝ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ۝ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُهْتَدُونَ ۝

O ye who believe! Seek help in patient perseverance and prayer (in times of distress and misfortune). (The help of) Allah is with the steadfast, (and through prayer a man forges a special link with Allah and attains nearness unto Him). And call not those among yourselves who are killed in the way of Allah "dead". Nay, they are living, only ye perceive not (the special existence that is conferred upon them). And, surely, We shall try with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and crops (for it is essential for those who walk in the path of Allah to pass through such trials). And O Messenger! Give glad tidings to the patient and the persevering slaves whose state is such that when a misfortune striketh them they say: Verily, we are Allah's and, at

the end of the brief span of earthly life, we have to return to Him for sure. Such are the slaves on whom are special blessings from their Lord, (and mercy). Such are the rightly guided. (—II: 153-7)

What a wonderful provision of solace and comfort do these verses contain for the believers when things go wrong with them and they are afflicted with loss or suffering! Patience and perseverance, the forging of a living contact with God through prayer, and meditation on the truth that everything belongs to Allah and we all have to return to Him one day,—these three things offer to man such an inexhaustible reservoir of courage and strength that no believing person need feel helpless or miserable as long as he leans on them for support and comfort.

(ii) Call of the Lord to His slaves towards Mercy and Paradise

وَاطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ۖ وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَوَاتُ
وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ۚ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُطَيْبِ وَالْمَآفِيقِ عَنِ النَّارِ
وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاجِرَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ
وَمَن يَغْفِرِ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ تَوَلَّوْا صُفُوفًا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ جَزَاءُ مَن مَّغْفِرَةٍ
مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّةٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ وَبِعَمَلِهِمُ الْغَيْبِ ۚ

And obey Allah and the Apostle, that ye may find Mercy; (Those who obey Allah and the Apostle alone are deserving of Mercy). And vie with one another for Forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Paradise as wide as are the heavens and the earth, and prepared for those who ward off evil, (whose way is) that they spend (in good doing) of that which Allah hath given them, in ease and prosperity and in adversity and indigence, and are forgiving toward mankind; Allah loveth such good-doing slaves. And those (too are deserving of Forgiveness and Paradise) who, when they do an evil thing or wrong themselves, implore Allah and beg Forgiveness for their sins,—Who forgiveth sins save Allah?—, and will not knowingly repeat the wrong they did. The reward of such will be Forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever, a bountiful reward for those who do such deeds. (III: 132-6)

The proclamation of our Lord, in sum, is that the Gates of His Forgiveness and Paradise are open to the believing slaves who do not persist in wrong-doing but turn to Him in sincere repentance after they have been at fault or committed a sin.

(iii) Fundamental teachings of the Divine Faith

قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَفَلَمَّا خَلَّيْنَاكُمْ عَلَىٰ آدَمَ لَا تَشْكُرُونَ ۚ ثُمَّ إِذْ جَعَلْنَا مِن بَيْنِ يَدَيْكُمُ الْبُرْجَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَدُنْكُمْ
مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْكُمْ نَارًا تَلْقَوْنَ أَفَلَا تَعْلَمُونَ ۚ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا
النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَهَٰذَا بَلَاءُ لَّكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ۚ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ
إِلَّا بِالْيَقِينِ مِن أَحْسَنِ حَالٍ سَلَمَةٍ أَشَدَّ إِذَا ذُكِّرُوا بِكَ لِيَذْكُرُوا أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَاءٍ قَلِيلٍ ۚ لَا تَكُنْ لِّلْغَنَىٰ
وَسْمَاءٍ ۚ وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا وَلَا تَوَدَّ بَاطِلًا ۚ وَبِهِدِ اللَّهُ أَوْفَا ذَٰلِكُمْ وَهَٰذَا بَلَاءُ لَّكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَذْكُرُونَ ۚ

Say (to them, O Prophet!) Come, I will recite unto you that which your Lord hath made a sacred duty for you: (the first and foremost is) that ye ascribe nothing as partner unto Him. (Keep strictly away from every kind of polytheism); (and then) that ye do good to parents, and kill not your children because of penury. We provide for you and will provide for them also and draw not nigh to lewd things whether open or concealed, and ye slay not the life which Allah hath made sacred, save in the course of justice; this is what He commandeth you, in order that ye may discern. And approach not the property of the orphan save for his own good (for managing it on his behalf, as a trust) till he reaches maturity, and give in full measure and in full weight, in justice (when you sell or return a thing to anyone). We tax not any soul beyond its capacity. And when you give your word do justice to it, and speak the truth, even though it be against a kinsman; and fulfil the covenant of Allah (by observing your duty to Him faithfully). This He Commandeth you that haply ye may remember. (—VI: 152-53)

(iv) The end of those who respond to the Divine Call and those who do not

الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُ لَوْ أَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ قَامُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْحِسَابِ ۖ وَمَا وَهُمْ بِحَتْمٍ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْإِهَادُ ۖ أَفَمَنْ يَعْلَمُ أَكْبَارَ أَنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقِّ كَمَنْ هُوَ غَسِي ۖ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولَٰئِكَ الْأَلْبَابُ ۖ الَّذِينَ يُؤْفُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَتَّقُونَ الْوَيْثَاقَ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا بِعِقَابِ اللَّهِ وَجُورِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً وَيَدْرُءُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّخَنَةَ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَقَبَى الدَّارِ ۖ جَنَّتٌ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّهِمْ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَدْخُلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ بَابٍ ۖ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِمْ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ ۖ

For those who answered Allah's Call and carried out His Commands is bliss; and for those who answered not His Call (is a dreadful end). (Such will be their state in the Hereafter that) if they had all that is in the earth, and therewith the like thereof, they would proffer it to obtain release (from the Punishment). Such will have a woeful reckoning and their (last and eternal) habitation will be Hell which is a dire abode. O Prophet! The blessed servant who knoweth that what is revealed to thee from the Lord is the Truth, can his end be like the end of him who is blind (to this Reality)? (Evidently, their ultimate destiny cannot be the same). But only men of understanding pay heed to the Guidance and accept it. Such of the servants as keep the pact of Allah and break not the covenant; such as unite (the ties and bonds) which Allah hath commanded should be joined, and fear their Lord, and dread a woeful reckoning; and such of the believers as persevere in seeking their Lord's good pleasure and are regular in prayer and spend of that in His way, secretly and openly, which We have bestowed upon them and overcome evil with good, theirs will be the sequel of the heavenly Home, i. e., Gardens of Paradise which they will enter, along with parents and partners in life and children in whom there is some virtue. The angels will enter unto them from every gate, saying: Peace be unto you because you persevered (in the path of piety and righteousness), and sweet is the sequel of the heavenly Home for you. And those who break the covenant of Allah after accepting it, and sever (the bonds and tie) which Allah hath

commanded should be joined, and make mischief on the earth: theirs is the curse and theirs will be the ill abode of Hell. (—XIII: 18-25)

(v) Stern warning to defiant transgressors and their fate in the life to come

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهُ غَافِلًا عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ تَشْخَصُ فِيهِ الْأَبْصَارُ ۖ مِنْ طَائِفَةٍ لَمْ يَنْفَعُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يَقُولُونَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ نَحْبِ دَعْوَتَكَ وَنَتَّبِعَ الرَّسُولَ ۖ أَوْ كَمْ تَكُونُوا أَقْسَمْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ بَالِكُمْ مِنْ ذَوَالِ ۖ وَسُكُنْتُمْ فِي مَسْكَرٍ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ مَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ وَفَرَسْنَا لَكُمْ الْأُمَثَالَ ۖ وَقَدْ مَكَرُوا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ تَكْوِينُهُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ لِيَتَزَلَّ مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ ۖ فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهُ مُخْلِيفَ وَعْدِهِ رُسُلُهُ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انتِقَامٍ ۖ يَوْمَ يَبْدُلُ الْأَرْضَ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاءَ وَبَرَزُوا لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ ۖ وَتَرَى السَّجِرَ مِنْ يَوْمَئِذٍ مَقْرُونِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ ۖ سَرَابِلُهُمْ مِنْ ظُرُوفٍ ۖ تَنْفُسُ وَجُوهُهُمْ النَّارُ ۖ لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ تِلْكَ نَفْسُ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيمٌ الْحَسَابِ ۖ هَذَا بَلَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنذِرَ ذَوَابِهِمْ ۖ وَلِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّهَا هُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْوَاحِدُ ۖ وَلِيَذَكَّرَ أُولَٰئِكَ الْأَلْبَابَ ۖ

Let ye never deem that Allah is unaware of what the wicked do. (He knows all about them and their misdeeds). But, He hath deferred their requital till a Day whose horrors will be such that their eyes will stare in terror as they will come hurrying on in fear. With their heads upraised (like a camel), their gaze returning not to them, out of anxiety and nervousness (i. e., their eyes will forget to see) and their hearts as air (i. e., bereft of peace). And O Prophet! Warn mankind of the Day when the doom will come over them, and those who did not wrong will say: Our Lord: Reprieve us for a little while (so that we may make amends for our misconduct); we will follow Thy Call and obey Thy Messengers. (They will be answered): You are saying this today when the Chastisement has come over you. Did ye not (in the denial of the Great Reckoning of the Hereafter) swear before that there would be no end for you (i. e., you would never be punished for your sins)? Although you had dwelt in the dwellings of those who had wronged themselves of old and it had become plain to you how We had dealt with them (because of their transgression) and We had also narrated examples from history for you (through Our Apostles and Messengers) yet ye took no lesson from them and persisted with your wrongdoing.

And they plotted and hatched conspiracies for blocking the path of Allah, and all their plots and conspiracies are in the knowledge of Allah, and, verily, these plots and conspiracies were such that they could move even the mountains, (but before the Will of Allah none of them could succeed). So, think not that Allah will fail

to keep His promises to His Messenger (for example, of punishing the wicked and the transgressors). Lo! Allah is Mighty, (no one can stop Him from carrying out His promise and punishing the evil-doers); He is Able to Requite the Wrong. This all become manifest on the Day when the earth will be changed to other than the earth, and the heavens also will be changed and they (the mankind) will come forth unto Allah, the One, the Almighty. Thou wilt see on that Day the guilty linked together in chains, their raiment of pitch, and the Fire covering their faces, This will be that Allah may repay each soul with what it hath earned. Lo! Allah is swift at reckoning. This is a clear message for mankind in order that they may be warned thereby, and they may know that (their and everyone's) God is only One God, and that men of understanding may take heed. (—XIV: 42-52)

(vi) Some of the basic tenets of Islam and Divine Commandments

[illegible]

Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none save Him, and (after this

fundamental requirement of strict Monotheism the next commandment is) that ye show kindness to parents. If one of them, or both, were to attain old age with thee, say not 'Fie' unto them, nor scold them (i. e., behave with them in an insolent manner), but speak unto them a gracious word, and lower unto them the wing of submission through kindness and pray for them that O Lord! Have mercy on them both as they did care for me when I was little.

Your Lord is best aware of what is in your minds. If ye are righteous, then, verily, He is ever forgiving unto those who turn unto Him.

And give the kinsman his due, and the needy and the wayfarer, and squander not thy wealth in wantonness. Lo! the squanderers are the eternal brothers of the Devil, and the Devil is the eternal ingrate to his Lord. (So do not be like him). But if (you may be hard pressed and not in a position to serve them, and on account of it) you may have to turn away from them, and you are hopeful of mercy from Allah and the seekers of it, then (by way of excusing yourself) speak unto them a kindly word, and (even in these circumstances) refrain from saying anything that may be hurtful to them.

And neither let thy hand be chained to thy neck (that it may not move in charity, which is the way of the misers) nor open it with a complete opening (like foolish wasters and squanderers) lest thou come to grief and be rebuked from all sides. (Make moderation your way and avoid excess at both ends). Thy Lord enlargeth the provision for whom He will, and straiteneth it for whom He will. He sees all His slaves and is well-informed about them. (The keys of the provision are not in your hands, nor in the hands of anyone else, but solely in His hands. He alone is the Provider of everyone's needs). Kill not your children, fearing a fall to Poverty. We shall provide for them and for you. (If you imagine that the question of livelihood is in your control, it is sheer ignorance and apostasy). (Anyway) the slaying of one's children for fear of poverty is a great sin. And, lo! Come not near unto adultery. It is an abomination and an evil way.

And slay not the life which Allah hath forbidden save in justice. Whosoever is slain unjustly, We have given power unto his heir (to claim the penalty of death), but let him not commit excess (in the claiming of this right). Verily, he is entitled to sympathy and help (but he is not allowed to cross the limits of law in his eagerness to take revenge).

And come not near the property of the orphan (do not touch it), save for his own benefit and in the right way till he comes to maturity. And keep your promises. Lo! Of the promises ye shall be asked (in the Hereafter).

Fill the measure when ye measure, and weigh with right balance. (Do not cheat in business). That in meet, and better in the end. And, (O men), follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge (i. e., shun superstition and avoid self-deception). Lo! The hearing, the sight and the heart—of each of these means of knowing it will be asked (that how did ye make use of them for the sake of obtaining right knowledge). And walk not on the earth exultant (like haughty and vainglorious men). Do not forget that thou canst not rend the earth (with your feet), nor canst thou stretch to the height of the hills. All these evil ways and works are hateful in the sight of thy Lord.

This is part of the wisdom wherewith thy Lord hath inspired thee, O Mohammad!

And, (O men), set not up with Allah any other god, lest thou be cast unto Hell reprov'd, abandoned. (—XVII: 23-39)

(vii) Special obligations of Muslims and their goal and mission

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَسُجَّدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَانصُرُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ
وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ
مِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا يَتَّبِعُونَ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ
فَمَنْ شَهِدَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَوْتُ فَامُتُّوا بِمَا شَهِدَا عَلَيْهِمَا وَاتَّبِعُوا الْوَسْطَ الْبَيْنَ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

O ye who believe! (Now your duties and special obligations are that you) bow down and prostrate yourselves (before thy Lord) and worship Him (in every way) and do good to His creatures that haply ye may prosper. And strive for Allah with the endeavour which is His right. He hath chosen you (specially for His worship and struggle in His Cause) and hath not laid upon you in religion any hardship. (On the other hand, it is a very broad and extensive religion that He hath conferred on you through the holy Prophet)—that faith of your father Abraham is yours. We have named you Muslims ('Those—who have surrendered') of old and in this last Scripture as well so that the Prophet may be the expounder among you and you may be the expounders among mankind. Hence, O

ye who believe! (for the proper fulfilment of this duty and mission) Establish worship, pay the poor-due and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protective Friend. A blessed Patron and a blessed Helper. (—XXII: 77-78)

May Allah grant us, the Muslims, the wisdom and good fortune to understand our mission and obligations in the light of these exhortations and make ourselves deserving of His Mercy and Benevolence by carrying them out and living up to them, with sincerity and conviction, for this, indeed, is the highest culmination and pinnacle of all human progress and achievement.

(viii) The Call of Allah to His erring slaves and the sequel of those who reject it

قُلْ يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ
جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ وَاتَّبِعُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَسِمَ الْوَالَهُ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ
الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُخْفَرُونَ ۝ وَاتَّبِعُوا أَحْسَنَ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ
الْعَذَابُ بَغْتَةً وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ ۝ أَنْ تَقُولَ نَفْسٌ يَحْسَرُنِي عَلَىٰ مَا قَرَّرْتُ فِي
جَنِّ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ كُنْتُ لِنَفْسٍ خَافِرِينَ ۝ أَوْ تَقُولَ لَوْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هَدَانِي لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ۝
أَوْ تَقُولَ حِينَ تَرَىٰ الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنَّ فِيَّ كَرَّةً ۝ فَأَكُونُ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ ۝ بَلْ قَدْ جَاءَكَ نَذْرٌ
أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا إِنَّكُمْ كَانْتُمْ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ۝ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَرَىٰ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا
عَنِ اللَّهِ وَجُوهَهُمْ قَالِبَةٌ أَلْوَيْتُ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لَلْثَّائِرِينَ ۝ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ اللَّهَ فَهُوَ سَعِيدٌ
لَا يَسْأَلُهُمْ الشُّعْرُ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۝ اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ۝
لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَافِرُونَ ۝ قُلْ أَغْفِرُ
لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ ذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَتُوا بِالْحَقِّ ۝ وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ آلِ الْفِرْعَوْنَ نَذِيرًا
لِيُخْبِطُنَا عَنْكَ وَتَكُونُ مِنَ الْخَافِرِينَ ۝ بَلِ اللَّهُ لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْكَ الْخَبْرُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ۝ وَمَا
قَدَّرَ اللَّهُ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَتَنْبُوذُهَا تَنْبُوذًا ۝
وَتَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْفَعُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَيُخَوِّضُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ
اللَّهُ ثُمَّ لَنَحْضِيَهُ أُخْرَىٰ فَلَا أَهْمَ قِيَامُهُ يَتَطَرَّقُونَ ۝ وَاتَّقُوا الْأَرْضَ بِرُءُوسِهَا وَهِيَ الْكِتَابُ
وَجَاءَ الْبَاقِينَ وَالْهَدْيُ قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَتَنْبُوذُهَا تَنْبُوذًا ۝ وَذُكِّرَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ
عَمَلُهَا وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ۝

O Prophet! Say (to My slaves on My behalf), O My slaves who have been prodigal to their own hurt (by indulging in Apostasy and

Polytheism): Despair not of the mercy of Allah. (Do not suppose that your sins cannot be forgiven. If you give up the life of Apostasy and offer earnest repentance, the door of His mercy is open for you also) Allah forgiveth all sins. Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. (Hence, if you really are solicitous of forgiveness) turn unto Him repentant and surrender unto Him, before there come unto you the doom when ye cannot be helped. And (casting aside the life of intransigence and sin) follow the better guidance of that which is revealed unto you from your Lord, before the doom cometh on you suddenly (when ye know not). And, beware! Let it not be (that in the Hereafter) anyone of you should say with sorrow: Alas, my grief that I was unmindful of Allah, and I was indeed among the scoffers! Or that any soul should say: If Allah had but guided me I would have been among the dutiful: Or, should say (on seeing the Chastisement of God on that Day) that Oh! If I had but a second chance I might be among the righteous! (But then the answer will be) Nay, for My revelations came unto thee, but thou didst deny them and wast scornful and wast among the disbelievers. And on the Day of Resurrection thou (Mohammad) will see that the faces of those will be blackened who lied concerning Allah (for instance, who said about their Polytheistic beliefs and practices and other superstitious ways and customs that they were from Him). Is not the home of the scorers in Hell? And the slaves who (gave up the godless and sinful ways) and took to righteousness Allah will deliver them from Hell. Evil shall touch them not, nor shall they grieve.

Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the Guardian over all things. His are the Keys of the heavens and the earth, and they who disbelieve the revelations of Allah such are they who are the losers.

Say (O Mohammad, to the disbelievers)! Do ye bid me to serve other than Allah? O ye fools! And, verily, it hath been revealed unto thee and unto those who ascribe a partner to Allah that all thy deeds will come to nought and thou, indeed, will be among the losers. (Therefore, do not go nigh Polytheism) but serve Allah alone and be among the thankful.

And also, they esteem not Allah as He hath the right to be esteemed, (although His Glory is such that) the whole of the earth (from the east to the west) will be in the palm of His hand on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens, too, will be rolled therein. Glorified is He and High Exalted from all that they ascribe unto Him as partner. (—XXXIX: 53-67)

(ix) Glad tidings to the Believers who submit to the Word of God and follow His Guidance

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسْتَغِيثُونَ مِنْهُ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ اللَّهِ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الرَّسُولِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسْتَغِيثُونَ مِنْهُ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ اللَّهِ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الرَّسُولِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسْتَغِيثُونَ مِنْهُ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ اللَّهِ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الرَّسُولِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسْتَغِيثُونَ مِنْهُ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ اللَّهِ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الرَّسُولِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسْتَغِيثُونَ مِنْهُ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ اللَّهِ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الرَّسُولِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسْتَغِيثُونَ مِنْهُ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ اللَّهِ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الرَّسُولِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسْتَغِيثُونَ مِنْهُ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ اللَّهِ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الرَّسُولِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسْتَغِيثُونَ مِنْهُ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ اللَّهِ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الرَّسُولِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسْتَغِيثُونَ مِنْهُ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ اللَّهِ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الرَّسُولِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسْتَغِيثُونَ مِنْهُ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ اللَّهِ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الرَّسُولِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

Lo! Those who say (sincerely): Our Lord is Allah (and lead a life of loyalty unto Him), and remain true to it afterwards, the angels will descend unto them with the joyful tidings that: Fear not, nor grieve, but hear good tidings of the Paradise which ye were promised (through the Apostles). We are your Protecting Friend in the life of the world and in the Hereafter. There (in the Paradise) ye will have all that your souls desire, and there ye will have all that ye ask for. A gift of welcome (and hospitality) from the Forgiving, the Merciful.

And who can be better in speech than him who invites (the servants of the Lord) unto Him, and is himself righteous and upright, and saith: Lo! I am of those who surrender unto Him?

And the good and the evil deeds are not alike, (their sequel is different from one another; (therefore, you and your followers are advised to) repel the evil deed (mischief of your enemies) with one which is better, then (the result of it will be that) he between whom and thee there was enmity, will become as though he was a bosom friend. But this gentleness of behaviour can be possible only to those who are endowed with the virtue of patience and to those who are the blessed servants of the Lord (i. e., not everyone is able to practise forgiveness). And (at such a moment) a whisper from the Devil may reach thee (i. e., you may feel like being overcome by anger and the spirit of revenge), then seek refuge in Allah. Verily, He is the Hearer, the Knower. (He will help you with His Protecting Hand and you will remain safe against the evil designs and temptations of the Devil). (—XLI: 30-36)

(x) Save yourselves from the Fire of Hell and attain felicity of the Hereafter and Paradise through sincere repentance

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْأَشْيَاءُ عَلَيْهِمْ عَلَيْهَا صُفَرٌ تُمْرَدُونَ
لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ۝ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَعْتَبُوا الْيَوْمَ إِنَّا تَجْعَلُوكُمْ
مَالِكُمْ تَعْبَلُونَ ۝ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يَتُوبَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ
وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَى
بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا نُورَنَا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا لَكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝

O ye who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whereof the fuel is men and stones, over which are set (from God) angels strong, and severe, who resist not Allah in that which He commandeth them, but do only that which they are commanded by Him to do.

(On the Day of Resurrection it will be said to the transgressing Apostates and the deniers of truth): Make no excuses for yourselves this Day. You are only being paid for what ye used to do. (Thus, he who wants to save himself from the punishment of the Hereafter should give up the like of Apostasy and irreligiousness in this very world, and opt out for a life of belief and righteousness).

O ye who believe! Turn unto Allah in sincere repentance! After sincere repentance, your Lord (will bestow upon you His special favour) and will remit you from your evil deeds (i. e., He will forgive you) and bring you into Gardens underneath which rivers flow; and (it will be on a Day on which) Allah will reward the Prophet, and with him all those who believe with full felicity and not debase them. Their glory on that Day will be such that their light will be running before them and on their right side and on their lips will be this (inspired) prayer that:

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا نُورَنَا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا لَكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝

Our Lord! Perfect our light for us, and forgive us. Verily, Thou art able to do all things. (—LXVI: 6-8).

The verses we have reproduced here are only by way of an illustration—'a handful of specimen from a heap of grain'—otherwise the Quran is full of revelations which contain a full provision of advice and exhortation for those whose hearts have not become dead to moral and spiritual feeling. The last quarter of the Quran, from *Sura-i-Saba* onwards, is, particularly, devoted to instruction and admonition, so much so that it can be said without the least hesitation that if a person of good sense and understanding who, also, possesses some knowledge of Arabic, reads it, he will experience on every page of this concluding part the thrill and inspiration which the Quran itself has portrayed so vividly in these words:

تَقْشَعْرِمِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ
إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

Those in whose hearts there is some fear of their Lord, their flesh doth creep when these revelations are recited before them, and, then, their bodies and their hearts (i. e., both the outer and the inner aspects of their existence) soften and they surrender to the Guidance of Allah. (—XXXIX: 23)

One word more and we have done. The readers are requested to treat this volume only as a brief introduction to the teachings of the Quran. The writer swears by God that it is his honest opinion, and not merely a sentimental observation, that what he has said in these two hundred pages about the guidance of the Quran is not even like a drop from an ocean. The endeavour should, therefore, be to develop an attachment for the Quran itself by reading wholesome books on the subject. And attachment to the Quran, indeed, is attachment to God. May Allah open our hearts to it—Amen!

ISLAM AND THE WORLD is the most popular work of the reputed author. Originally written in Arabic, the book has been rendered into English, French, Turkish, Persian and Urdu. In each language it has seen several reprints so far.

This book undertakes a study of the impact of Islam on history: the role Islam played in the story of human progress and the loss humanity has suffered by its downfall. In the words of its English Translator, Dr. Asif Kidwai, the aim of the author has been "to stir the Muslims into an appreciation of Islam's glorious role in the story of human progress, and to promote in them, thereby, a desire to look into themselves, with a view to finding out how far they have been true to their duty and mission to the world." The book provides an emphatic refutation of the charge that Islam has outlived its usefulness, and hence, it would be futile to look up to it for guidance in the modern context of things. It presents Islam as an eternal reality and a programme of life which can never grow obsolete.

This thought-provoking study throws new light on motives, opportunities and impact of Islamic and other civilizations on the material welfare as well as spiritual progress of humanity.

BY

ABUL HASAN ALI NADWI

QURAN AND YOU

The Author has attempted to cover the entire range of Quranic teachings, from the conceptual to the practical, in these few hundred pages, and, in this, he has succeeded admirably. Proceeding from the fundamental article of faith and subjects like Divine Attributes, Apostleship and the Hereafter, the narrative goes on to include what the Quran has to teach about social and moral behaviour, monetary dealings and the importance of earning a clean livelihood. All these things have been discussed with utmost clarity and conciseness. But the most valuable part of the book is the one which deals with the Quranic concept of Monotheism. In it the author has explained the various aspects of the doctrine of Divine Unity—Unity of being, Unity of Attributes and Unity of Functions—in such a convincing style that it cannot fail to bring satisfaction to anyone whose heart is not totally dead to spiritual feeling.

The Quran being a guidance for mankind, and not exclusively for Muslims, Maulana Nomani has paid due attention to the needs of non-Muslim readers while expounding the basic tenets of the Quran. This has not only enhanced the value of the book but also made its rendering into other languages particularly worthwhile.

